

Losing Face

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Losing Face

by [casey_writes_domestic_fluff](#)

Summary

It's not until George is finally drifting off to sleep, feeling sticky and used, that he really sees it. He sees the man he used to be, brazen and content. He misses that man dearly.

He wonders how he withered away into bruises on thighs and scarring on wrists. He

wonders if he could still turn back or if it's too late for him.

He wraps his arms tighter around himself, sobbing silently as his fingers dig into his rib cage. He doesn't want to spend the rest of his life like this. But he doesn't want to die tonight, either.

If you want, I can fly out. Or you can come here.

Maybe it's time George let somebody love him.

- - -

Or, the one where George is in an abusive relationship and Dream will stop at nothing to show him that he deserves better.

Notes

General Disclaimer: Both Dream and George have publicly consented to slash fiction. If they ever change their mind, I will delete this work without hesitation. Other CCs mentioned in here have either consented to or have never spoken about their feelings toward SFW, non-shipping portrayals in fanworks, but if that changes, I will be more than happy to edit them out.

Also, please note that this is all in good fun. I do not actually ship dnf (like, I think they would be cute if they ever *did* decide to date but I'm not actively rooting for it). I understand that both George and Dream publicly identify as straight and unlabelled respectively and that none of us have the right to comment on, make assumptions about, or accuse someone of lying about their sexuality.

Additional note: This story is potentially triggering. There will be trigger warnings before each chapter and all potential triggers will be in the tags. I do not want anyone to be upset by this story. I do not include graphic depictions of the abusive actions themselves, rather focusing on the psychological effects of abuse in order to prevent romanticisation, but even still, this could be triggering. This is just my way of dealing with the things I've experienced throughout my life. I am completely projecting onto both Dream and George here. I will try to avoid romanticisation of abuse and the god-awful "damsel in distress" trope, but at the end of the day, this is a hurt/comfort romance fic, so there will likely be some amount of "saving." If you ever think it's too romanticised, please feel free to let me know in the comments and I will try my best to fix it.

Furthermore, I want to reiterate that if any of the involved CCs mention that anything in this work would be triggering to them, it will be either taken down or edited immediately, depending on what exactly is triggering. If any of you notice that I accidentally included something that a CC has mentioned is triggering/makes them uncomfortable, please feel free to let me know in the comments and I will fix it immediately.

first and foremost

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

tw: emotional abuse, manipulation, dubcon kissing, implied dubcon sex

Stones materialise in George's stomach as he hears the front door open. "Alright guys, it's getting pretty late here. I'm gonna go make some dinner. Thanks for tuning in to my stream! I'll see you guys tomorrow!" Confused emotes flood the chat before he ends the stream.

"Oh, uh," George hears Dream fumble to mute his stream. "Is something wrong?"

"No, no. I'm just hungry."

"Oh, uh, okay." Dream sounds confused, but he doesn't push. "Well, bye. I love you."

"Bye, Dream."

"John," he calls out, pushing his office door open.

He finds John on the couch, beer in hand, watching Netflix. "Hey baby, come sit," he calls over his shoulder.

George sits next to him on the couch, cuddling into his chest. "What'cha watching?"

"Planet Earth," he replies, calmly slipping his hand down to grab George's ass. He just holds his hand there, not trying to start anything but rather to prove his ownership.

George steels himself and, in his most gentle tone, says, "You know I love having you here. But we have rules for a reason. You have to text me before you come over so I can end my stream, ok?"

John's body tenses perceptibly, his nails digging into George's thighs. "Sorry, I forgot that you're embarrassed of me."

"I'm not embarrassed of you. I'm just not ready to come out to all of those people, ok? It would be hell for both of us."

"Yeah. Wouldn't wanna ruin your DreamNotFound highlight reels."

A look of disbelief crosses George's pale face. "That is *so* not what this is about."

"Really? Then why won't you tell your stream?" John demands.

George sighs, brushing his knuckles lovingly against John's cheek. "I told you, I love my stans more than anything but they're intense. They would scrutinise every aspect of our relationship and I'm just not ready for that."

"Sure. Of course," John huffs.

George sits up, feeling small and suffocated. "What the hell is wrong with you lately?"

John sits up, too, and even like this, he towers above George. He grabs his chin hard and forces

George to look into his eyes. “You. You are what’s wrong with me.” He closes the gap between them too quickly, crashing their lips together. George tries to pull away, but the hand on his jaw holds him in place. John bites hard at his lip, taking advantage of George’s pained gasp and pushing his tongue into his mouth. It’s all wrong, all red, hot anger. It’s not what a kiss should be, and George wants out of it.

He pushes against John’s chest until he finally lets go. George springs up from the couch instantly, stance defensive, backing instinctively toward the door.

John stands, too, looming over George’s small frame. “That was a kiss.”

“I didn’t *want* a kiss right then, and I certainly didn’t want you to hold my face down while you drew blood,” he says, swiping his thumb over his lip and bringing it back bloody.

“Bullshit,” John murmurs, stepping ever closer to George. He mimics George, brushing his thumb softly over his boyfriend’s bloodied lip. He holds his gaze as he gently presses his thumb inside George’s mouth. “God, baby, you make me so crazy. I love you so much it hurts sometimes.”

George feels nauseous. He just wants to get out of this situation, to sit back down on the couch, and watch Planet Earth, and not feel so pathetic all of the time. “I love you, too.”

“I think you owe me an apology, baby.”

George drops his gaze to the floor. He just has to get through this. He just has to swallow his pride and get through this because that’s what relationships are, right? Compromise. Give and take. “I... I’m sorry,” he rasps. “I shouldn’t have gotten mad at you for coming over during my stream. I know you just missed me.”

John smiles, leaning closer, so close that George can smell the beer on his breath, and whispers, “Make me believe it.” He pushes George to his knees, ignoring the tears shimmering in the corners of his eyes.

Chapter End Notes

I hope y'all liked that. That's about as descriptive as the abuse scenes will get by the way and all sexually abusive/coersive scenes will take place outside of the story itself (like how it was implied in the last line but not actually shown). Sorry if I'm, like, over-trigger-warning-ing this haha, I'm just nervous because I've never really written a serious fic before and I don't want anyone to have a bad time :))

Comments give me happy chemicals <3333

I've seen him going out with you

Chapter Summary

George stays up late online with Dream. John isn't pleased.

Chapter Notes

tw: (inaccurate) accusations of cheating, (inaccurate) slut shaming, possessive behaviour, physical abuse (slapping)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"NONONONONONONONO YES!" George screams as he gets the final hit off on Dream, on half a heart himself.

Dream wheezes while George screams about how amazing he is. He hears a door open in the background. At first, he assumes it's just the settling of the house, but then he hears George's breathing pick up.

"I've got to go," he whispers, promptly leaving the call without so much as a goodbye.

Dream tries to ignore the hurt desperately clawing its way up through his chest. Somebody had come over at nearly two o'clock in the morning and George had left him immediately. Dream tried not to jump to any conclusions but based on the information he had, there was only one logical explanation.

This was bound to happen eventually. Dream knew that. He thought he was prepared for it. But really, how could he be? How can one ever be prepared for a sledgehammer to the chest, for the shatter of their ribs and the way the shards puncture their lungs. The feeling of drowning in your own blood and of watching yourself die. How can one ever prepare to watch the love of their life find someone else?

The pain is unbearable, but Dream shoves in down, so far below his heart, down to the knotted pits of his stomach where he keeps the memories he wishes he had.

Dream falls into bed and lets his eyes drift shut, praying the night will bring visions of George, but when he wakes, he remembers nothing but darkness.

- - -

"John?" George calls, creeping out of his office.

"George." John leans against the wall, arms crossed, eyes dangerous. "I thought you said you were having an early night."

"Yeah. Yeah." George fumbles for an explanation. "Couldn't sleep, decided to play some games."

"You should have called me."

George cocks his head, feigning confusion. "I don't see why. We've spent every night this week together."

John stalks closer, towering over George's small frame. "Who were you talking to?"

George cowers before him. "Just Dream," he rasps, throat arid. "We were planning out the storyline for next week's streams."

"You were talking to *Dream*," he spits the word out like it burns, "at *two o'clock in the morning*."

"Yeah, we always talk late. It's the time difference. It's only, like, nine there."

John's cool facade shatters, the rage tainting his words. "I can't believe this! You're lying right to my fucking face."

"What?" George is genuinely confused now. He knows that John wanted to spend the night with him, and he shouldn't have ignored him like he had, but why would he lie about who he was on call with? "I'm not lying to you. I was on call with Dream. You can check my Discord if you want."

"Not about that." John edges impossibly closer to George, almost stepping on his toes. George tries to back up but only ends up trapped against the wall. "I'm sure you were talking to Dream. You're always talking to Dream."

"Yeah, of course. He's my best friend." Then, hoping to sound less suspicious (of what, he isn't entirely sure), he adds, "He's my business partner."

"Are you fucking him?"

George's jaws drop as he tries to process what he's hearing. "*What?*" is the most eloquent sentence he can form at the moment. He sputters for a moment.

"What are you even talking about? He lives in *Florida*!"

"Oh, like that would stop you. I bet you're whoring yourself out for him on those late night video calls, aren't you?"

"John, what the *fuck* are you on about? Dream is my best friend. We would never, *ever*—"

"Shut up!" he yells, shoving George harder against the wall. "Shut the fuck up! All you do is lie, you stupid fucking—"

George doesn't hear the end of that sentence over the ringing in his ear as John's palm makes first contact. This is the first time he's ever really...

George slumps against the wall in a daze. He fixes his eyes on a point across the room, as the first tears slip down his face. He's crying, but not like he should be. He isn't scared, or sad. He isn't panicking, really. He's barely even there. He barely feels like a person anymore.

"I'm sorry," George whispers, sincere as he can be when he can barely form a coherent thought. "I'm sorry. I should have called you. I should have asked you to come over. But I would never cheat on you. I swear on my life."

John studies his face, cold and unrelenting. He chucks his chin lightly, backing away just an inch. George's knees had given out at some point and now, without John pressing him into the wall, he

slides down and collapses in a puddle on the floor.

John crouches down in front of him, stroking the hair from his sweaty forehead. It would almost feel sweet if not for the glare piercing George to his core. And then he stands, and leaves, and George is left to sob against the wall, frozen and burning, all at once.

Chapter End Notes

Comments give me happy chemicals <33333

she wrote an album. and that's something that I can't do.

Chapter Summary

George comes out to Dream. Dream tries to do the same.

Chapter Notes

tw: very brief, non-descript mentions of homophobia

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George hasn't been online for three days. He's afraid that if he were online, if he spoke to Dream, he might break entirely. He might tell Dream. He can't tell Dream.

On the fourth day, he makes a decision. He needs to talk to Dream. He needs some degree of comfort, of validation, but he can't tell him what's really going on. He wouldn't understand. So he decides to tell the prologue to his story, and nothing more.

May 5, 2021 17:32

>dream< morning gogy

>dream< I'm gonna do some mining on the smp. wanna join?

May 6, 2021 15:14

>dream< hey

Yesterday at 21:54

>dream< hey, sorry if I'm bugging you, just wanted to make sure everything is ok. no one's heard from you in a few days now. I'm here if you need anything

George's fingers shake violently as he taps out:

Today at 12:04

**hey, sorry, just had a lot going on lately >georgenotfound<
I'm sure you're still asleep rn so just call me when you get a chance, yeah? >georgenotfound<**

George's phone lights up immediately with a phone call from Dream.

“Hey,” George says softly.

“Hey, are you alright? You’ve been radio silent for, like, a while now, man.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine. Everything’s fine. I just...” George tries to keep a handle on his breathing. He knows Dream won’t judge him. At least, logically, he does. They have a bunch of LGBTQ+ friends and Dream had never been a dick about it. But that doesn’t stop the gnawing voice in George’s head from telling him that Dream will be disgusted.

He’ll be revolted knowing that he’d made so many lewd jokes with George over the years, and he’ll feel violated, and hang up, and never speak to George again. He knows it’s irrational. He knows it won’t happen. But that doesn’t stop the tears from tumbling down George’s splotchy cheeks as he chokes out, “Dream?”

“Hey, hey,” he whispers, soft, like he’s trying to catch a wild animal. “I’m here. What’s wrong, Georgie? What happened?”

“Dream, I need—I need to tell you something.”

“Okay?”

“I’m... Fuck. *Fuck*,” George mutters. He takes a deep breath and tries again, “Dream. I’m gay.”

Dream is silent for a moment and George’s heart stops in his chest, a trapped fox, restricted, dying, but not being killed. Slowly starving to death, trying to gnaw itself free.

Finally, Dream speaks again. “Is that it?” he asks, soft and sweet as ever.

George bursts out in laughter. He’s still sobbing, but it’s just funny, ya know? This is arguably the most important conversation George will ever have in his life and, “Yeah, that’s it.”

“Georgie,” Dream murmurs. “I’m so sorry.”

George is hardly breathing. “What?”

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry for whatever it is I did that made you think you couldn’t tell me that. George, I don’t care if you’re gay. I mean, I’m proud as hell of you for coming out, but I don’t care. You’re still my best friend. I still love you. No matter what. Always.”

He still loves me. I still have Dream. Everything will be alright if I still have Dream.

The tears streaming down George’s face don’t stop—if anything, they speed up—but they’re different now. The vivacious flow of a river, rather than the endless waves of an ocean. “Thank you, Dream.”

- - -

George is gay. Dream can’t even process the words. *George is gay.*

Dream has a chance.

But that thought, tempting as it is, is quickly pushed to the back burner as Dream realises that George is still sobbing on the other end.

He’s sobbing because of Dream.

Somehow, in some way, Dream had managed to make George think that his love for him was

conditional. Like it could be revoked for something as petulant as sexuality.

"Georgie," he sighs, unsure of what to say. *Should I tell him I'm queer, too? No, no. Don't make this about yourself. Should I make a joke? Lighten the mood? No, he's too fragile for that right now.* A million options flooding his skull, filling it with cement so it drags along the dirt. He settles for, "I'm so sorry."

"What?"

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry for whatever it is I did that made you think you couldn't tell me that. George, I don't care if you're gay. I mean, I'm proud as hell of you for coming out, but I don't care. You're still my best friend. I still love you. No matter what. Always."

Now, George is really crying. Just sobbing, and rambling under his breath, something that sounds like, "Thank you, Dream," over and over and over again. George finally composes himself and says, one last time, clear and strong now, "Thank you, Dream. You're a good friend."

Dream's heart shatters with those words, his previously pushed-aside idea roaring back to the surface.

"George, I think—" Dream starts.

At the same time George says, "Sorry, I'm just—"

In sync again, they say, "You go." They laugh awkwardly before George starts again.

"I was just gonna say that I'm sorry for getting so emotional. I've just been really stressing out over this lately. John—that's my boyfriend, by the way—god, I can't wait for you to meet him. You two would get on so well—" George is still speaking, but Dream doesn't hear a word of it. *Boyfriend.* He replays the word over and over in his head until it's nothing but a shrivelled, distorted voice. *Boyfriend.* George has a *boyfriend*.

"So, what were you going to say?"

Dream is snapped out of his reverie to find tears streaming silently down his face. The phone in his hand trembles as he tries to form words in his pitiful, parasitic brain.

"Nothing," he manages at last. "Just that I'm proud of you, Gogy."

And George giggles. A sound that, on any other day, would have lit up Dream's entire face, but now, it only serves to make him nauseous.

- - -

Ending the phone call with Dream, George immediately rings John. He tells him that he finally came out to Dream, like John's been bugging him to for weeks now, and that he told him about John, too.

"Good," is John's only response. But it's enough. It's always enough. He's happy, and so George is happy, too.

John comes over a few hours later, and the two cook dinner together. They laugh and chat and snuggle up to watch a movie. It's just like it was in the beginning, and George remembers why he fell for John in the first place.

Chapter End Notes

Comments give me happy chemicals <33333

is he better than me?

Chapter Summary

Dream finally meets John. His jealousy consumes him and he lashes out. George ends up paying the price.

Chapter Notes

tw: manipulation, guilt-tripping, emotional abuse, physical abuse (shoving, kicking)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Over the course of the next few days, George slowly opens up, filling Dream in on all the treasured moments George had wanted to share but felt he couldn't. It makes Dream want to rip his own spine out and use it as a baseball bat. But George is so happy, he sounds so happy, and Dream wants nothing more in this world than to see George happy. So he forces polite conversation and pretends that he hasn't spent every night this week cuddling his pillow and pretending it's a warm body with dark hair and dark eyes.

It's about a week later that Dream finally meets John. He and George are coding a new challenge when he hears a door creak open on the other end.

"Hey. Am I interrupting?" A deep, gruff voice.

"John! This is actually perfect. I've been meaning to introduce you two." Dream watches as George's PFP disappears, replaced by George's smiling face and, behind him, a tall, handsome man. With tangible glee, George says, "John, meet Dream. Dream, this is John."

Dream sputters for a moment, fumbling for something polite to say. He settles for, "Hey man, it's so good to finally meet you. George has told me a lot about you." *Too much. Asshole.*

John walks closer to the camera, so his forehead is cut off, crossing his arms in front of his puffed chest. *He's posturing. Why is he—Is he trying to impress me or something? Or—Oh my god, you're kidding.* "Dream," he spits the word like it's made of acid. "It's a pleasure."

He's jealous. He's jealous of me.

"Babe?" John starts, still looking dead into the camera, like a panther stalking its prey. "I think it's about time to make dinner, don't you?"

George's entire demeanour shifts. Usually so bratty and full of life, the George Dream knows would have told him to go make it himself. But this George just stared up for a moment, then back at the project they were so diligently working on, and hummed, "Yeah, you're right. I'll go get started on that, then." He turns back to the camera, smiling once more, warm and genuine. "We can finish this tomorrow, right Dream?"

Dream can barely register what's happening anymore. Something isn't right. Something is so, so very wrong. He stutters out, "Uh... yeah. Yeah, no big deal, we can just... Finish this tomorrow."

"Okie, bye Dream!" John is still hovering while George says goodbye. It feels awkward, possessive almost. It pisses Dream off. So, he says goodbye, too. Exactly like he normally would. *Exactly* like he normally would.

"Bye Georgie! I love you!"

He regrets the words the instant he sees the colour drain from his friend's face. George leaves the call immediately, and Dream feels like the world's biggest asshole.

He flops down in his bed, replaying the entire interaction in his head, over and over and over again, until it's so muddled and confused that Dream can't quite picture John's face anymore. He can't exactly say he's disappointed by that.

Dream knows he screwed up. He was being a petty, petulant asshole, screwing with his best friend's relationship just to regain some morsel of pride. He wonders if it was his tone in the beginning that made John so uncomfortable. He had tried to be polite, but maybe John could just sense something, and that's why he was posturing. Maybe Dream had just been making a mountain out of a molehill, a jealous, possessive boyfriend out of a merely awkward one. Maybe George was just hungry and didn't feel like working anymore. Maybe he just wanted an excuse to get off the call with Dream so he could hang out with John instead.

That night, Dream doesn't cuddle his pillow while he falls asleep. He throws it across the room instead. He needs to put an end to this shit before Wilbur writes a damn song about him.

"Bye Georgie! I love you!"

The words George lives for, the words that fill him with an inexplicable warmth, the feeling of being loved, of being cherished, now wash over him like waves in the wintertime. George scrambles to end the call, like he can cut the words off before they reach John's ears. But he can't. Of course he can't.

"What the hell was that?"

George swallows hard. He needs to stay calm. He didn't do anything wrong. He knows this is just something Dream says. He says it to everyone. He probably didn't even think about the way it would sound. So why does George feel so guilty?

He drags his eyes upward, meeting John's. They're blazing with fury, sending him spiralling further into his own dread. Pathetically, he manages, "It's just something he says. He says it to everyone, really, I swear. He's just really affectionate." He cringes as the words leave his mouth, knowing already that they weren't the right ones.

"Affectionate? George, you fucking moron, that *boy* is more than just affectionate. He wants to get in your pants."

George chokes on what little air he had pulled. "What the hell are you on about? Dream is straight, first of all. And second of all, even if he wasn't, he would never be interested in me. We're best friends. Have been for years." Unwisely, he adds, "You're acting fucking insane."

John shoves George in his desk chair, toppling him over and onto the ground. George can already

feel the splotchy bruises forming from where the arm of his chair slammed into his ribs. George rolls out of the overturned chair, kneeling on the floor, clutching his aching side. John shoves him back down, pressing his foot to his chest. “You wanna call me insane for defending what’s rightfully mine? Honey, I’ll show you insane.” He presses his foot down harder, crushing George’s sternum with each shaky sob.

Words are falling unchecked from George’s mouth. Pleas, appeals to the man he thought he knew, just begging over and over, “Please, please, *stop*.”

John lifts his foot ever so slightly, relishing in the sight beneath him as George takes desperate, heaving breaths. The ire in his eyes glows white-hot, delivering one last kick to his boyfriend’s ribs before turning and leaving the room.

George curls in on himself, digging his nails into the pale skin of his arms, littering them with angry, red crescents, and curses himself. For what exactly, he isn’t entirely sure. Maybe for being on call with Dream, or for introducing them, or for not setting clearer boundaries with him. Maybe for not paying enough attention to John, or for being too pathetic to fight back. He doesn’t know what exactly went so wrong here, but he knows it was his fault.

After some minutes, or maybe hours, George forces himself up, still clutching his bruised ribs, and drags himself into the bedroom where John is laying, scrolling on his phone like the entire world hasn’t been uprooted. And for him, it hasn’t.

George stumbles toward the bed and John looks up at last, sighing and outstretching his arms for George to curl into.

After they’re settled, George’s tear-stained face tucked safely into John’s collarbone, John murmurs into George’s hair, “You understand why I was so angry, right baby?”

George nods imperceptibly.

“I need to hear you say it, baby.”

“I understand why you were angry. You had every right to be. I shouldn’t have let Dream talk to me that way.” The words rumble against John’s throat, punctuated by a small, hesitant kiss.

Stroking his hair softly, John says, “I just love you so much. I love you so much and I’m so scared to lose you that it just makes me crazy sometimes.”

“I know,” George whispers, the words soft and weak, more to himself than anything.

“Say you love me, too, baby.”

George rarely said those words, and never to anyone but his family and closest friends. He wanted to mean them, with every fibre of his being. But he was so tired tonight, so mentally and physically exhausted. Words, anyway, had lost their meaning months ago. Into the safety of a warm, nurturing body, George whispers, “I love you, too, John.”

Chapter End Notes

I don't know if y'all are getting bored with the style of these chapters yet. I know the format is kind of repetitive in these first few chapters while I was establishing the tone.

But the story is starting to pick up now, so it should get more interesting from here.

Next chapter: Stream finds out about George and John. George isn't happy about it and Dream is there to comfort him.

Comments give me happy chemicals <333

I've seen what he can do

Chapter Summary

Stream finds out about John and George. George starts to spiral and Dream is there to pull him out, getting his first taste of just how cruel John really is.

Chapter Notes

tw: outing, fetishisation, emotional abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George and John are fighting again. It had become something of a regular event for the two.

“I’m just not ready, John,” George sighs. “You don’t understand. You couldn’t possibly understand how it feels to have so many thousands of eyes on you every single day. You never get to screw up. You never get to be scared, or sad, or stupid. Every word is scrutinised, picked apart. It eats you alive, John. I’m not ready for this to be scrutinised, too, ok?”

John scoffs, spitting back, “Oh, but you’re fine letting them drool over you and Dream, then?”

George groans instinctually. “Oh my god, John, I thought we were done with this. I told you, there is *nothing* between me and Dream. That’s one hundred percent fan-based.”

“Well, maybe if you’d stop gawking at his stupid fucking icon all day long, the fans wouldn’t think that in the first place!”

“What the fuck does he even have to do with this?” George pulls at his messy, tangled hair. “This is between you and me and I’ve made up my mind. I’m not telling stream. Not until *both* of us are ready.”

John steals his jaw, clenches his fists, and George cowers, bracing for first contact. But it never comes.

“Fine,” he mutters, stomping off toward their bedroom.

George releases the breath he was holding, slumping against the kitchen counter. He knows he’ll pay for this later, but for now, he has to get his shit together. For the viewers. For Dream.

- - -

Tommy monologues in the background while George picks at his cuticles.

“I have returned from the grave to avenge myself for the atrocities committed by this egotistical green bastard!” A door creaks open somewhere down the hall.

“I will stop at nothing to get my revenge.” Footsteps draw closer. George’s heartbeat picks up.

“I won’t rest until I see green blood on my hands, taste copper in my mouth.” George’s office door swings open, and George scrambles to mute himself in call and to kill his stream’s audio and facecam.

“On stream,” George hisses.

“I won’t rest until you look as bloodied and beaten as I did in that cell, and then, I’ll deliver the final blow, and watch you fade away into the darkness of nothingness, you worthless, nipple-faced son of a bitch.” John looks at his monitor and smirks, swooping forward and capturing him in a kiss.

George kisses him back, hoping to satiate him enough to be able to complete his stream in peace. A voice in his headset mumbles, “Uh, George?”

George pulls back from John, turning back to his computer to unmute himself on call and let Dream know that he’s busy and he’ll be back in a second. But when he turns around, he’s consumed by nausea. He missed the fucking button. His facecam is on.

He watches himself pale in the monitor.

He unmutes himself on stream, mumbles a quick apology, and ends the stream—and the call—without another word.

The tears are already welling up in his eyes, as he rises to his feet. “What the fuck is wrong with you?” he screams. “You knew my fucking facecam was on! You fucking saw that it was on and you fucking kissed me anyway when you knew how I fucking felt about it! You just fucking outed me in front of thousands of fucking people and lord knows how many more are gonna see the clips!” He falters, feeling the anger slowly drain out of him, only to be replaced with dread and resentment, guilt and a general sense of helplessness. “I-I just—I don’t even know what to say, John. I can’t even fucking believe you right now.” George can see the rage boiling over inside of his boyfriend, comforted only by a sick sense of pride in what he’s done. “Get the fuck out of my apartment. We can fight about this later. I can’t even look at you right now.”

Surprisingly, John does as he says, grabbing his wallet and heading out, probably to go get plastered at the nearest pub, and George is left alone to sob into his pillow, as he’s done so many times before.

His phone buzzes non-stop. Sapnap, Karl, Quackity, Wilbur, Bad—hell, even Tommy shoots him a text. But Dream is the most persistent. *Dream sounds nice right now*, George thinks to himself, feeling drowsy and small. *Dream could fix this. Dream can fix anything.*

With shaky fingers and even shakier breaths, George answers the call. “Dream?”

- - -

Tommy is monologuing about his murderous tendencies, as per usual, when Dream’s chat starts flooding with keysmashes, as well as some less than respectful messages like “OMFG SO HOT” or “DREAM GO GET YOUR MAN” or “GEORGE GETTING SOME.”

Dream is confused until a dono comes through, reading:

JAMIEPLAYZ donated \$3.60

Dream, please let George know that his webcam is still on. I think he meant to turn it off.

Shit.

Dream pulls up George's stream to find him making out with John while his chat goes absolutely feral. He definitely meant to turn off his webcam.

Dream checks their Discord to see that George is muted but not deafened. *Thank god.*

Dream mutes his own stream and mutters, "Uh, George?" George turns back toward his monitor, immediately seeing his mistake. Dream watches the confusion, the fear, the pain wash over him in waves. He would do anything to fix it, but he doesn't know what he *can* do.

George unmutes his stream, stumbling through a quick apology. "Shit, um, I'm sorry guys, I meant to turn off my camera. I, uh, I have to go deal with something. I, uh, fuck, um, I'll see you guys later." He ends his stream and leaves the call.

Dream unmutes himself, immediately shifting into damage-control mode. "Alright guys, pause. Everyone pause."

Tommy shouts, "There are no pauses in war!"

"There are now," Dream says, voice menacing. "This is serious. Everyone pause the game for a minute."

Everyone, even Tommy, hears the shift in tone and immediately pauses their game.

"We've just had an incident occur on stream where one of our members neglected to kill their facecam during a very personal moment. I'm sure most of you in chat know what I'm referring to. I will be asking that you respect his privacy. I know this is bound to happen but I will request anyway that you guys do not tweet about this or clip it. That was a private moment that was not meant to be shared with the world." The rest of the call goes silent, not entirely sure what's happened, but sure that Dream sounds *pissed*. Everyone's chats flood with heart emotes. Satisfied, Dream continues, "Alright, that's it. Thank you guys in advance for being respectful and understanding. You guys can go back to the game now," and promptly leaves both the call and the stream.

Dream slumps over in his chair, haunted by the image of the blood draining from George's face.

He calls George seven times and texts him a dozen more. He paces his small office, feeling helpless, like a wild animal caged by his own skin. "Come on, come on," he mumbles to himself. It's an hour before his calls are answered.

"Dream?" George sounds so small and scared, a child afraid of the dark. Nothing like the witty, independent Brit Dream knows.

"George? Oh my god, okay, you're alright. Are you alright? I'm so sorry, I didn't see when it first happened, I didn't know and—"

"Dream." George's shaky voice pierces Dream's rambling. "It's not your fault. It had nothing to do with you. It was me. I fucked up." The sobs coming through the call are like a bullet to Dream's heart. They cut off the rearing head of his anxiety, and he shifts back into the calm, collected figure he knows George needs right now.

"Hey, hey," Dream hushes. "It wasn't your fault. You didn't know. It was just a dumb, freak accident sort of thing that no one could have prevented."

“John could have,” George mumbles.

“What?”

“He saw. He’d been wanting me to come out to the fans for a while now. Said it was like I was embarrassed of him or something. We were fighting about it earlier. And he came in—maybe to yell at me again, I don’t know—and he saw that I hadn’t killed my webcam and he just... God, fuck, I’m such an idiot. I’m such a fucking idiot. I should have just agreed, made a video or whatever. I could have done all of this on my own terms and... Fuck. *Fuck.*”

Dream festers in his own shocked silence. “He knew? He knew that you were on camera and he... Fuck, George, I... I don’t even know what to say, I’m so sorry. That’s so beyond fucked up and—wait, sorry, my brain is still, like, catching up, but you can’t seriously believe that this is your fault? George, he outed you *on purpose* in front of thousands of people. That is, like, the definition of ‘his fault.’”

“Yeah, but he wouldn’t have had to do that if I would have just agreed, we could have done this right. We could have made a nice, respectful video instead of making out for thousands of people to see.” He pauses, then mutters, “Millions, probably, once this gets clipped.”

“I asked everyone not to clip or tweet about it. I know there’ll still be some assholes out there who do, but most of our fans are respectful. You’re going to be okay, George. You’re not alone here. You know I’ll stand by you through anything.”

“Thank you, Dream.”

“So what are you going to do when John comes back?”

“I don’t know. I guess we’ll talk about it. I’ll probably end up apologising or whatever. And then we’ll go back to how we always are.”

“Wait, what?” Dream sputters. “Okay, first of all, I meant how are you gonna break up with him but clearly we’re on different pages here. So why the hell would *you* be the one apologising?”

“I dunno. That’s just kind of how it works for us, ya know.”

“George. He *outed* you. You should *not* be the one apologising. Hell, he’s lucky I’m too far away to beat his dumb ass.”

“Dream,” George sighs. “Please, just... Fuck, I wish I hadn’t even told you about that. I should have just kept my mouth shut.”

Dream stumbles over his own rant. *George needs someone to be there for him. Even if I want to punt that little shit across the Atlantic, I have to focus on George for now.* “No. George, I don’t want you to feel like you can’t talk to me. It’s your relationship. It’s up to you how you want to deal with it. I’ll always support you, no matter what, okay? I swear.”

The line goes silent for a while. There are so many things unsaid, so many “I love you”s hanging on Dream’s tongue, so many half-truths clogging George’s throat.

“You’re a good friend, Dream,” George murmurs into the phone, exhaustion overtaking him.

Dream closes his eyes, pretends the words were different. “Well, you deserve the best.”

Chapter End Notes

Wow, two chapters in one day? I must have a major assignment due that I'm procrastinating on.

Next chapter: During a particularly brutal beating, George thinks back to how he met John.

Anyways, comments give me happy chemicals <33333

oh, what could have been

Chapter Summary

George thinks back to the honeymoon phase of their relationship and wonders how they ended up here.

Chapter Notes

tw: implied physical abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The smell of burning meat permeates the stark atmosphere, and George lie in the middle of it, sticky with sweat and blood, gripping onto consciousness. Gripping onto words, onto memories. Onto love he was promised and perhaps even given, once upon a time, so very long ago.

John stood across the room, glass of whiskey in hand, charming, mysterious, and utterly fixated on George.

In the middle of a conversation, John had left his group and made a beeline for George. He always had a way of making George feel like the only person in the room.

"Hi there," he said, sticking out his hand for George to shake. "I'm John."

"George," he replied, warily, trying to find his voice in the shadow of such a handsome man. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

"Oh, I assure you," John had whispered, leaning in closer, like it was a secret between the two of them. "The pleasure is all mine."

They had spent the night getting to know each other, respective groups utterly forgotten. And at the end of the night, John offered to wait with George while he called a cab, to make sure he was safe. He was a perfect gentleman.

A week later, they'd gone on their first date. To ensure their privacy, George had suggested that they stay in, have dinner and watch a movie. John, of course, was more than willing to oblige.

*They'd made spaghetti and meatballs together, laughing at how terrible of a cook George was, and they'd watched *Edge of Seventeen* and made slow, kind, passionate love on the couch.*

John was happy. George was happy.

George had wanted to rekindle the magic tonight, had wanted to fall in love all over again, but his bad cooking wasn't endearing anymore after nearly a year of practice. He had been so distracted, worrying about John, wondering what mood he would be in when he came home from work, that

he burnt the meatballs. That was what had broken their tower of cards. Burnt fucking meatballs.

Maybe it was a silly thing to get mad over, but aren't they all? George figures the subject doesn't matter so much now that he's on the floor, trembling hand raised to bloody nose.

And that night, for the first time in a long time, George prays. He prays to a god he doesn't even know he believes in, not for the pain to stop or for the beatings to end, but for just one last glimpse of the man he fell in love with.

He falls asleep on the floor.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not super happy with the way this chapter turned out (it feels really awkward and forced to me) so I'll probably go back and edit it again tomorrow, but I wanted to feed your guys' masochism additions, so here you go <33

Also, I know the source of the fight here being George burning the dinner seems sort of overdramatic but this is one of the parts of this book that is actually based off my own personal experiences, so yeah, please be nice. ANYWAYS.

BTW I started a Twitter that isn't just pure spam, so here go ahead and follow if you'd like. I'm always looking for new friends :))

<https://twitter.com/caseywond3r>
@caseywond3r

Comments give me happy chemicals <333

but what I can do is spit the truth. and it all leads back to you.

Chapter Summary

George does his first stream since the webcam incident. Afterwards, Dream expresses his concern for George with a major gesture.

Chapter Notes

tw: effects of manipulation (Stockholm syndrome-esque), mentions of physical abuse, effects of physical abuse (bruises, split lip)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George tried to stay offline until he'd healed up a bit, but he has a job to do and if he tried bailing out on the stream they'd been planning for weeks, Dream would have been way too suspicious.

George opens his stream, reading the comments for a while and finding a surprisingly low number of gay jokes and homophobic comments.

When his viewership reaches a decent level, George claps his hands together. "Alright guys, so we have a lot planned for today and we're gonna hop onto the SMP in a second, but I just wanted to say first and foremost, thank all of you for the overwhelmingly supportive response to last stream's incident. As I mentioned before, that was entirely accidental, but it happened, so I guess now, at some point, I'll have to talk about. I'll probably make a video talking a little bit more about all of that sometime this month but I'm gonna give you guys a chance to ask a few questions now if you have any. I would obviously ask that you all try to keep your questions appropriate and respectful."

JBABYLOVESDREAM donated £25

hi george! first of all I just wanna say I love you so much and I'm so sorry for what you're going through right now. I wish you'd had the chance to come out on your own terms. If you're comfortable answering, what exactly is your sexuality?

"Aww," George coos. "I love you, too, JBaby. And yeah, I'm okay answering that question. I identify as gay."

The chat spams with pride emotes.

NIKSABERS donated £10

Who was the guy from your last stream? Also, we all love and support you so much <3333

George blanches. His tongue feels heavy in his throat. He checks for the millionth time to ensure that his camera is still off.

He forces a laugh, tries to remember what it looked like to be in love. "That was actually my

boyfriend. His name is John and we've been together for a little over a year now. I've been wanting to introduce you for a long time now, so I'll probably include him in my coming-out video. Well, more like came-out video, I guess." He forces another laugh and it feels easier than before. He's getting too good at lying.

ELREYDELOSPUMPKINS donated £3.60

how does dream feel about all of this?

George rolls his eyes fondly. He knows what they mean, but he's going to answer as if he doesn't. He's seen far too much Jealous!Dream fanart as it is. "He's been so supportive through all of this. He was actually the only person on the SMP that I was out to at the time, and he was so great about it. I honestly think the whole stream thing stressed him out more than it did me." Another forced laugh. Always another forced laugh.

His lip is almost bloody with the way he's been biting it. He answers a few more questions, before saying, "Alright, guys, I think that's about all the questions I'm gonna answer at the moment, but maybe I'll do an AMA sometime soon." The chat floods once more with loving and supportive messages.

He joins the Discord, immediately being met by indecipherable screeching. Looks like Tommy's online.

"George! Come help me slaughter the child!" Dream shouts.

"Okay, okay, let me log on real quick."

"George..." Dream whines once the stream is over. "Turn your camera on..."

George just laughs, desperately pushing down the boiling anxiety in his gut.

"George..." Dream whines again, louder.

George giggles, barely hiding the bile in his throat. "No."

"You didn't have your camera on for the stream today, either," Dream points out.

"Bad hair day."

Dream laughs, but pushes further. "No, but seriously dude, turn on your camera. I miss your stupid face."

"No, Dream."

"Oh, come on."

George really hates to play this card—he knows it's a firm boundary for Dream—but he has no choice. "Fine. Turn yours on, too."

"Oh, come on, George," Dream mumbles. "That's not fair."

"It's perfectly fair. I don't feel like turning my camera on and you're trying to force me."

"I'm not trying to force you. I just miss you. You've been practically radio silent all week."

George sighs. "I know. I'm sorry. There's just a lot going on right now." Another half-truth. How many has he told this call alone? How far away is Dream from truly understanding what's going on in his life? In his head? How many years would it take for them to render out? To fade away from each other and the world with all the lies yawning between them?

"Talk to me, man. I'm really worried about you lately."

George drops his head into his hands. "Dream," he almost begs. "Please."

"George, I'm trying to give you your space here, I swear I am, but you're scaring me. I *need* you to talk to me."

George wants more than anything in the world to tell Dream what's going on. He wants to have one person in this world who can make him feel safe, feel heard.

"Dream," he sighs, outwardly exhausted, inwardly scrambling to hold together the crumbling remains of his resolve. "I can't."

Dream sighs into the mic. "George?"

"What?"

"Look at the call, George."

George grudgingly drags his head out of his hands. "What, Dr—"

Golden hair and tanned skin decorate his monitor. Emerald eyes pierce the screen and pin George to his seat.

"Dream?"

Perfect lips bend around a perfect word. "Hi."

"Dream, you..."

"Yeah, I know."

"I didn't..."

"I needed to do this, George," Dream huffs, running his hand through his hair. "I needed to look you in the eye and tell you that I'm worried about you. You've been withdrawing lately. I thought it was just me but you're not talking to anyone. Something is wrong and it's eating you up inside."

"Dream... I told you—"

"Don't say you can't, George. That's bullshit and you know it. Tell me what's really going on."

Dream's eyes are more insightful than George had ever imagined, but they're bloodshot and shiny and it makes George's skin crawl. *Please don't cry. God, Dream, please, please don't cry. If you cry, I won't be able to keep you in the dark anymore.*

Trembling fingers reach for the video button.

George listens as all of the air is sucked from Dream's lungs, and his voice breaks on a single word. "George?"

- - -

Dream has never had someone close to him die, at least not when he was old enough to truly experience the grief. But right now, he *grieves*.

“George?” He breathes his name like a prayer, a plea for this to be some thoughtless, douchebag practical joke. But yellow and blue bruises mottle his porcelain skin, and his lip is split open, and this is *real*. Somebody did this to him.

Dream’s face goes stone cold, jaw clenched, all emotion shoved away, eyes alight as he demands, “Who did this to you?”

George stays deathly silent.

“George, I swear to god, I’m about to book a plane ticket over there just to beat the crap out of whoever did that to you, so I’m gonna need a name.”

Still silence.

“George! Name. Now.”

George flinches at his volume. *He’s afraid. He’s afraid of me.*

Dream’s thoughts sprint off in a thousand different directions.

He’s afraid of me because I raised my voice.

He’s afraid of the yelling.

He’s been trained to be afraid of the yelling.

Somebody trained him to be afraid.

Somebody.

No.

No.

Dream wishes his camera wasn’t on as the tears stream down his face. “No,” he whimpers, shaking his head violently. “Tell me it wasn’t him.”

Silence. Grave, misty, rotting silence.

“George.” Frustration tinges his tone and he watches George flinch again. Every last fibre of energy within him goes into calming himself. “George,” he starts again, softer this time. “Did John do this to you?”

A slow, stiff nod.

Dream presses all the breath from his lungs, forcing himself to stay quiet until he can speak calmly. He refuses to make this worse for him.

“George, are you safe right now? Is he there with you?”

An equally hesitant shake of his head.

“Okay, here’s what we’re gonna do, ok Georgie?”

Wide, scared eyes look up at the camera.

“I’m gonna book you a hotel room somewhere he won’t be able to find you. I’ll call you an Uber and you can go spend a few days there while we figure out where to go from here. If you want, I can fly out, or you can come here, or I can ask Wilbur to check in on—”

“Dream.” It’s the first word he speaks, clear as a bell, not tearful or scared. Just one word. With nothing behind it. With everything before it. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Dream’s mind struggles to catch up when George says the words Dream had begged to hear so many times before. “I love him.”

It takes him a minute to process what he just heard, but when he does, all he can do is laugh. Because it’s a fucking joke. This is all such a goddamn fucking joke.

“George, you don’t love him. I mean, look at what he did to you. Look at the pain he’s caused you. And even if you did, by some miracle, love him, he sure as hell doesn’t love you.”

George’s eyes flash with ire. “Yes, he does.”

“No, George, he doesn’t. You don’t hit someone you love.”

George pauses, worries his lip. “He doesn’t always hit me.” He says it like it means anything, chin held high, almost prideful.

“George, are you even—” Dream cuts himself off, starting again, softer this time. “Are you even listening to yourself? I don’t care if he doesn’t ‘always’ hit you. He hit you at least once, probably more, and he’ll do it again. Do you really not think you’re worth more than that?”

“I knew you wouldn’t understand,” George sighs, dropping his head back into his hands.

“You’re right, I don’t understand. I don’t understand how you could ever possibly think that what he’s doing is—”

A door creaks in the background and George leaves the call without another word.

Dream is alone. With all of his thoughts clouding his brain, Dream is alone.

He sees it. He sees George cowering in a corner while John beats him bloody. Sees him shrink away from his happy, bratty self, and transform into something smaller, more submissive. Sees him blend into the background. Sees him disappear.

Maybe if you’d been a better friend, he would have told you sooner, before it got this bad.

Maybe if you’d told him you love him sooner, he wouldn’t have been here in the first place.

Maybe if you’d loved him more, he would have felt it.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is almost as long as the last three combined lol

Side note: You are never responsible for somebody else's self-esteem. Dream is absolutely not at fault for George being in this relationship. When I write things like "Maybe if I had done [x], George would be happier," those are his thoughts and his way of blaming himself. They are not my personal thoughts on the matter at all.

You're all valid and I love you <3333

are you good enough to be his wife?

Chapter Summary

John expresses some concerns about George.

Chapter Notes

tw: disordered eating, (inaccurate) fat-shaming

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George hurries to shut his computer down and compose himself. Pushing the door open with a hesitant smile, he calls, "John?"

George follows the gruff response into the foyer. He drapes his arms across his lover's shoulders and gives him a chaste kiss which quickly devolves into a passionate, scorching thing.

George giggles and pushes weakly at his chest. "John, stop it. I have to start dinner." He pulls away and walks to the kitchen, John trailing behind. "I'm starving," he groans.

John just hums, almost sarcastically.

"What?" George asks.

"Nothing, nothing, just..." He looks George up and down. "Putting on a little chub there."

George feels his cheeks go up in flames as he resists the urge to look down at himself. He doesn't feel like he's gained weight. His clothes don't feel any tighter.

John stalks toward him again and grabs him by the hips, thumbs sinking bruise-deep into soft flesh.

"I didn't notice," George mutters.

"Oh, well," John says, almost reassuringly. "It's nothing you can't fix." He smiles and presses a kiss to George's cheek before leaving to change out of his work clothes.

George feels too sick to eat that night.

Chapter End Notes

Super short chapter, so next chapter will be up within the hour :))

Side note that the disordered eating (using that phrase cos George will not have a full-blown eating disorder and his food-related issues will take up a pretty minor part of

this fic) here will be even more vague than the rest of the abusive scenes because it's actually a major trigger for me. I'm writing about it because I want to focus more on the recovery aspect and the idea of learning to love yourself and take care of yourself again.

Y'all are valid and I love you <33333

DMs always open at twitter.com/caseywond3r

oh, let it be said, my dear, I was gonna wait for you

Chapter Summary

Dream gives one final, desperate plea for George's safety.

Chapter Notes

tw: possessive behaviour, mentions of effects of physical abuse (bruises, split lip)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream doesn't text George that night, partially because he's still trying to process what he's heard and partially because he doesn't know if he can trust that John won't check George's messages.

The next morning, though, he sends a carefully-worded message, and just prays George doesn't decide to spend another week in radio silence.

hey, need to talk to you about yesterday's stream. don't know where we're going with this plotline. call me when you can. >dream<

- - -

George wakes up feeling warm and safe, tangled in his lover's arms.

He nuzzles his face deeper into John's neck with a soft sigh.

"Morning, baby," John mumbles, pulling George impossibly closer. Sleep tints his voice, the whole scene feeling terribly domestic.

"Good morning," George murmurs, placing a chaste kiss to John's throat. He wriggles around in his grip, turning to check the time on his phone. "Well, good almost-afternoon," he corrects, shutting his phone and burrowing back into his boyfriend's chest, only to find he'd gone stiff.

"You had a text."

George hums. "I had a few texts, but nothing that can't wait ten more minutes while I get my morning cuddles."

"You had a text from Dream."

"Dream can wait," George whines. "I want my morning cuddles."

John pushes George coldly away. "Why don't you answer it?"

“I will...?” It takes a moment for it to click in George’s mind. “I’m not hiding anything from you, if that’s what you’re thinking. You know you’re free to check my phone or my computer whenever you want.”

“Yeah,” he huffs. “That’s why you won’t even check your messages while I’m next to you.”

“I thought it would be rude to interrupt our morning by texting someone else.”

“Sure.”

George realises there’s no winning here.

What if Dream mentions what I told him yesterday?

No, not over text. Dream is too smart for that.

But what if he’s not?

George takes a leap of faith and hands his phone over to John. “Check for me?”

John eyes him suspiciously before opening his phone and reading aloud, “Hey, need to talk to you about yesterday’s stream. Don’t know where we’re going with this plotline. Call me when you can.” He hands the phone back to George, seemingly sated.

“See?” George asks, relief overriding impatience. “It’s just business. Nothing to hide.” He wraps his arms back around his lover, hiding a knowing smile in John’s warm, strong chest once more.

“I love you,” John mumbles, in place of an apology.

“I love you, too, babe.”

It’s an hour before George texts him back, and even then, it’s just to tell him that he can’t call for another hour. Dream paces impatiently while he waits, skull overflowing with feelings of failure and bitter malice.

But eventually, the call does come. For an instant, Dream wishes it were a video chat, but then his traitorous brain conjures images of his best friend’s split lip and bruised cheek. “George?”

“Yeah.” The voice sounds crackly, raspy in a way Dream can’t just blame on shitty WiFi. “I’m here.”

“Just you?” Dream asks hesitantly.

“He’s at the supermarket. I probably have an hour before he comes back.”

Dream heaves a sigh of relief before starting in on him. “What the fuck, man? You just dropped that on me and then *left*. I was so worried all night. I’m so worried *now*.”

An almost indecipherable, “I’m sorry.”

“I don’t want you to be sorry. I want you to be safe.”

“I am safe,” George assures him. “I really am, I promise. And I am sorry. I’m sorry for dropping something like that on you when I knew from the start that you wouldn’t understand. I should have

just kept it to myself.”

“George,” Dream sighs. “I don’t want you to feel like you have to keep this to yourself. I’m glad that you felt safe enough to tell me. But you’re right. I don’t understand why you would ever, *ever* think that you deserved something like this.”

George is quiet for a moment before saying, “It’s really not that bad, Dream, I swear. I was just being dramatic.”

“George, I saw the bruises.”

“That was my fault.”

“What could you have *possibly* done—” Dream cuts himself off, chastising himself for shouting again. “What could you have possibly done to deserve that?”

George goes silent for a moment. He mutters something unintelligible.

“I can’t hear you, George.”

He tries again, only a sliver louder than before. “I burnt the dinner. It was our one-year anniversary and I burnt the dinner. That’s why he got mad.”

Bile rises in Dream’s throat. He swallows it down, relishing in the burn, before responding. “George. You have to know this is wrong.”

“It doesn’t matter if it’s wrong, Dream.” *Don’t say it, don’t say it.* “I love him. More than anything else in this world, I love him.”

The tears Dream’s been holding back for the past twenty minutes come streaming down his face, now. Desperately, one last plea for salvation, Dream opens his mouth and his reverence spills out. “And *I love you*. More than anything else in this world, *I love you*, George. You’re the sweetest, funniest man I’ve ever met, and you make me smile every time you come online, and I would do anything in the world to erase the pain off your face right now, to make you smile, because you are so, so beautiful when you smile. And I know how to love you, George. Maybe not perfectly, maybe I could have done it better, and maybe if I had then you might not have felt so low about yourself that you thought you had to settle for a pathetic, abusive, monstrous son of a bitch. But I do love you, George. I’ve been doing it half my life and I intend to do it a hell of a lot longer. And I know this is terrible timing, but I had to tell you now. I had to make you see that you *are* loved by someone who truly knows what love means, who would rather die than cause you pain. Please, please,” he begs. “Don’t make me watch the love of my life go through this.”

George is silent for an infinite moment on the other end of the line.

“You really love me?” he asked softly.

A prayer, “More than anything.”

Time passes, or maybe it doesn’t, and Dream floats on the feeling of loving, of being loved.

“Then, you’ll never say that again.”

Dream feels the floor drop out from underneath him.

George continues, “I see how badly this is hurting you and I’m sorry. I meant it when I said I wish

I had never placed this burden on your shoulders. But I don't love you, Dream."

Dream's heart pounds in his chest, yet it feels like it's stopped. *I don't love you, Dream. I don't love you, Dream. I don't love you, Dream.*

George maunders on. "I'm sorry. You truly are my best friend, and I never intended to hurt you like this. But I love John and I can't just leave the second things get rocky."

He pauses, then adds, "And if you truly love and respect me, then I think you'll understand that."

And this must be what it feels like, Dream thinks, for your entire world to fall apart.

Chapter End Notes

I am very sorry for this chapter and I'm sorry in advance for next chapter. I have done bad things :))

Comments give me happy chemicals <333

so this is not an act of spite. it's a visceral coming-to.

Chapter Summary

Dream and George suffer the consequences of their respective confessions.

Chapter Notes

tw: mild manipulation, physical abuse, vague suicidal ideation

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream doesn't know how much time passes between George's words and his own, but he suspects it's a lot.

When Dream's mind finally comes back online, he forces the words off his tongue, bitter and messy. "I understand."

"It's nothing to do with you. You're an amazing guy and—"

"Save me the speech, George," Dream snaps. "I get it."

"Dream, please don't—"

"Don't what?" Dream breaks into a bitter laugh. "Don't get upset? George, you picked a man who beats you bloody over a man who's been by your side since you were nineteen years old. I think I have the right to be a little ticked."

"I didn't mean it like—I didn't want it to be like—" George fumbles pathetically for an explanation until Dream cuts him off.

"You should go, George. Loverboy'll be home soon and you don't want him to catch you talking to me."

"Dream, please..." George begs, his voice raw with unshed tears. "I'm sorry I can't return your feelings, but please, you're the only person I have left. I *need* you."

What's left of Dream's heart shatters at the way George pleads with him. Softer now, kinder, he says, "I'm sorry. That was fucked up, what I said. I'm just... Fuck, man, I'm *hurt*. I'm really fucking hurt right now and I just need some time. Just a couple of days to get my shit together. And then I'll be back and everything will be okay again. I promise."

Dream listens to George's soft sniffing, wishing more than anything to take that pain away.

"You'll be back?" he asks, sounding so much smaller, so much more scared than he should ever be.

"I'll be back," he promises.

“Okay.”

“Okay.”

- - -

George is alone.

For the first time in years, George is utterly and truly alone.

He plays the words over and over again in his head until they're distorted, empty echoes of themselves.

The sweetest, funniest man.

So beautiful when you smile.

Love of my life.

Don't get upset.

Picked a man who beat you bloody.

By your side since you were nineteen.

Really fucking hurt.

Need some time.

Everything will be okay again.

- - -

The next day is a really fucking bad day.

George can't even remember how the fight started, but he knows it ended with him pinned to the wall, bruises renewed, left eye swollen shut.

A single thought breaks through the pained haze in George's mind. *I want Dream.*

And more petulantly, like a child missing his favourite toy, *I want my best friend.*

And as he slinks to the floor, aching and exhausted, George thinks just how lovely it would be to stop existing altogether.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was planned to be excruciatingly painful but then it got split into two parts because I am mentally exhausted and could not handle writing it all today. So basically, you get an extra 24 hours of anticipation before the super angsty part :))))

Also, I wrote a super long author's note explaining how both Dream's and George's respective actions are immature and harmful but it contains some spoilers, so I'm

going to attach it to next chapter instead, so for now, let's just suffice it to say that I absolutely do not support either of them in their actions throughout last chapter, this chapter, and next chapter. This is a work of fiction and they are very flawed characters.

On a happier note, we get a Sapnap appearance next chapter :))) (I may mostly write DNF but I'm an absolute Sapnap bitch. I kin so hard, it's almost pathetic.)

All my love <3

oh, let it be said, my dear, I was gonna wait for you

Chapter Summary

Dream seeks advice on how to deal with his unrequited feelings toward George.
George tries to deal with the pain on his own.

Chapter Notes

tw: brief mention of vomiting, manipulation, emotional abuse, physical abuse, suicide attempt via cutting

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I don't love you, Dream.

I don't love you, Dream.

I don't love you, Dream.

I love him.

Dream has always been more emotional than he lets on to be, but he'd never cried like this. Hours upon hours of shaking and sobbing and forgetting to breathe. He feels like a stupid, lovestruck teenager.

He tries to get some sleep, just to escape the horrors of consciousness, but behind his eyes, he sees bruising hands on a pale, delicate waist. He falls out of bed.

He punches a hole through the wall, which, of course, makes him think of John. He throws up.

He needs a friend. And usually, that means he'd call George.

That's the worst of all of this, if you ask Dream.

By the second day, he's stopped crying. He doesn't feel any better—if anything, the reality of the situation weighs heavier the longer it sets in—but he doesn't cry. He doesn't even feel real anymore. His body is just a vessel for all the hurt, all the anger that won't fit inside his soul.

He knows he should keep this to himself, but he can't. He needs someone.

A dial tone fills the eerily silent room.

A calm, gravelly voice answers on the fourth ring. "Yo."

Silence sinks deeper into his veins. He tries to think of something to say, but he can barely remember how to speak.

“Dream? You there, man?”

Dream’s tongue feel heavy in his mouth as he says, “Yeah.”

“You alright? You sound rough.”

What am I even doing here? “No,” Dream mumbles, muffled by the lump in his throat.

Dream hears shuffling on the other end of the line, and a door closing. “What happened?”

He wishes he could put on some performance of emotion, but he just feels... drained. “I told him I love him, Sap. And he doesn’t love me back.”

- - -

Sapnap has known about Dream’s crush on George probably longer than Dream himself has. They never discussed it, but they never really had to. It was the sort of thing that was just understood. Sap had honestly thought George felt the same, though. At least, up until the webcam thing.

“Why don’t you start from the beginning?” he prompts. “Tell me what happened.”

“I can’t,” Dream mumbles.

“What? Why not? Is it embarrassing or someth—OH MY GOD DID YOU GUYS HAVE PHONE S—”

“Jesus Christ, Sap, *no*,” Dream snaps. “What the hell is wrong with you? Jesus fucking—”

“Okay, okay! Well, what is it, then?”

“It’s something personal to George. It’s not my place to tell you.”

“Okay, respect, respect,” Sap hums. “Then, just tell me what you can.”

Dream sighs, choosing his words carefully. “You know his boyfriend, right?”

“Yeah. John, right? Did they break up or something?”

Dream huffs a bitter laugh. “God, I wish. No, they’re still together. He’s a total douchebag and I tried to... Well, I just wanted George to know that he was worth more than that, ya know?”

Sap doesn’t like where this is going. “So you tried to break them up?”

“I mean, yeah, I guess. I just... I thought that... We’re so close, ya know? I just thought that maybe if I finally told him, maybe he would...”

“I’m sorry, man.” Sap tries to be consoling, even if he is a little ticked that his friend tried to steal another man’s boyfriend. “That really sucks. I know that must have been hard for you to tell him.”

“I just... I just can’t believe that he would choose some *random fucking guy*,” Dream rambles. *Ah, fuck, here we go.*

“Well, I mean, he’s not exactly a ‘random fucking guy.’ That’s his boyfriend.”

Another biting laugh, almost as maniac as his online persona. “Yeah, his fucking boyfriend. Great guy. So much better than me, apparently.”

“Look, man,” Sap huffs. “I’m sorry that you’re hurting—it always sucks to get rejected—but you can’t blame George for this, okay? You can’t force him to love you.”

“I know that,” Dream snaps. “Of course I fucking know that. I just thought... I just thought that maybe...”

Alright, so that’s how we’re gonna have to play this. “Maybe what?” Sap demands. “Maybe he would leave his long-term relationship for a guy who’s been crushing on him for years but never had the balls to make a move, but wants him now that he’s taken because he hates the idea of not getting what he wants?”

He can practically hear Dream’s blood boiling.

“Fuck you, Sapnap,” Dream snarls. “I came to you for comfort, not to be fucking berated—”

“I’m not trying to berate you,” Sap says, gentler now. “I’m trying to make sure you don’t do anything stupid.”

“I just told my best friend that I’m in love with him and got fucking rejected. How much more stupid can I get?”

“Alright, first of all, *ow*. Love you, too, bestie. And second of all, I know you, Clay. You lash out when you’re scared. I’m here for you and I care about you, but I know that you’re about to do something stupid like yell at George for not returning your feelings, and that’s not okay.”

Dream goes suspiciously silent. *Goddammit.*

“You already did, didn’t you?”

“I didn’t mean to...”

“Clay, you can’t *punish* George for not loving you. That’s not how this works. I mean, you say his boyfriend’s an asshole but—”

“Don’t you dare finish that sentence,” Dream growls. “You have no idea what’s going on there.”

Sapnap’s lungs deflate. Dream can be an asshole sometimes but his voice is *dripping* with unbridled hatred. “Clay... When you say his boyfriend—”

“Don’t ask me what you’re about to ask me,” Dream warns. “It’s not my place to answer.”

Sapnap swallows so hard his throat burns. *Don’t go chasing tragedy. You don’t know what’s going on. Just... Focus. Focus on supporting Dream. Focus on supporting George.* “Okay, okay, okay,” he maunders. “Fuck. Okay.”

“Do you see now why I’m so hurt?”

Sap takes a minute to collect his thoughts before speaking again. “Clay,” he sighs. “There was never any question about why you’re hurt. You have every right to grieve this. But you don’t have the right to take it out on George. Especially if he’s going through something right now. He needs you more than ever and you can’t just push him away because you’re hurting.”

“Sap, I just...” Dream drifts off, starts again, “I don’t even know how to breathe without him here with me.”

“So, don’t let him get away. Don’t push him so far in some last-ditch attempt to protect yourself

that you lose him altogether.”

Dream goes so quiet for so long that Sapnap thinks they’ve lost connection. Finally, low and fearful, as though it’s a secret, “I love him, Sap.”

“I know you do, bud.” Sapnap rests his head in his hands, wishing he had the magic words to strip the pain from Dream’s voice. “And you deserve to process that however you feel is safest and healthiest for you. But I know you, Clay. Better than anyone—Hell, better than George. And I know that if you push him away, you’re gonna regret it. You need him damn near as badly as he needs you, even if you’re both too stubborn to admit it sometimes.”

Dream stays quiet a moment, collecting his thoughts and, for once in his life, thinking before he speaks. “You’re right, Sap. God, you’re always right. I hate you.”

“I know,” he hums.

“I’m gonna call him now.”

“Wait,” Sapnap calls. “Clay, you’re still pretty emotional. I know you want to be there for him, but maybe just take the night. Take a breath, watch some chick-flicks, let yourself have one last night to mourn, and then tomorrow, you can start fresh together.”

Dream sighs into the phone. “Right again, Sap. I’m fucking exhausted. It’s been, like, two days since I’ve gotten any real sleep.” Dream tries to laugh at himself, but it comes off flat.

“Alright, dumbass. I’m gonna order you some Taco Bell ‘cause I have a feeling it’s been a while since you’ve had a real meal, too. And then you should get some sleep. I’ll keep my phone on if you need me.”

“Thanks, man. For everything.”

“It’s what I’m here for.”

Sapnap hangs up and orders the Doordash. Dream sends him a meme of a dog holding up a sign that says, “YOU’RE ACTUALLY MY BESTEST FRIEND IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD.”

Sap walks back into the living room, collapsing next to Karl. The ten-minute conversation had drained all of his energy for the night.

Karl runs his fingers soothingly through his boyfriend’s hair. “What did Dream want?”

Sapnap just curls into Karl’s side, leaning up for a tender kiss. “I’m so glad I have you,” he whispers, pressing his cheek to Karl’s chest, listening to the rhythmic beating of their hearts in sync.

Karl nuzzles against Sap’s messy hair and murmurs, “Me, too, Pandas.”

- - -

George is almost disappointed to hear the slam of the front door, indicating that John had gone out for the night. George had never felt as truly alone as he did in that moment, and any company, even that of a fist in his face, would have been welcome.

Trembling fingertips trail up bruised and bloodied skin. His tongue darts out nervously against his lip, tasting copper. He peels his T-shirt away from his body to inspect the footprint on his ribs. He

thinks they might be broken.

In a broken sob, George cries out, "Please."

He doesn't know what he's calling out for, what he needs so desperately, but it doesn't matter because nothing comes of it. He's alone. He's completely fucking alone.

He can't be alone.

He wouldn't survive it.

He won't survive it.

George stumbles into the bathroom, the mirror judgmental and cold. He takes in his appearance, takes in the blood caked to his face and his swollen, darkening eye.

"Fuck you," he snarls at the pathetic shell of a man staring back at him.

George throws open the top drawer and, for the first time in months, he feels alive, invigorated. After everything that's happened, all the pain he's caused, all the pain that's been caused him, he's finally getting out. He wonders absently what Dream would think. He hopes, sick as it may be, that this pains him. He wants him to feel the pain of being so utterly alone. Of knowing your best friend left you in your time of need.

He finds what he's looking for.

Blade to wrist.

Goodnight.

Dream spends the night trying to take care of himself as thanks to Sapnap, but he's too anxious to eat much of anything, let alone to get any sleep. He plans out what he's gonna say, how he'll apologise for snapping at George, how he'll support him and try to help him get out of the situation without pressuring him again.

He feels okay now that he has a plan. He can't wait for morning to come.

Tomorrow, he thinks, is going to be a bright and hopeful day.

John stumbles home a little after two in the morning, smelling like whiskey and cheap perfume. He sees the bathroom light on and pushes the door open, betting he can get lucky again tonight.

The sight in front of him sobers him in an instant.

"Goddammit, George," he mutters, watching the boy's eyes crack open ever so slightly. "Are you fucking kidding me?" He drags George's limp body out from the empty bathtub.

He inspects the cuts on George's wrists. They aren't too terribly deep, probably passed out more from the overwhelmingness of everything than from the blood loss itself. Under his breath, he mutters, "Couldn't even kill yourself right."

He cleans him up, his anger ebbing as the water runs clear. He places one gentle kiss to each wrist.

“What were you thinking, baby?”

For the first time since John had found him, George opens his eyes fully, staring somewhere behind John’s, and whispers, almost robotically, “I love you.”

- - -

Today at 7:52 A.M.

hey, I just wanted to say that I’m really, really sorry about the way I acted the other day. I was being a total dick. call me when you can. >dream<

- - -

“Good morning, baby.” The words come from above his head, floating like dust in the wind, impossible to catch as he floats toward consciousness.

George nuzzles his face into John’s chest, but it aches. He pulls back and brings careful fingertips to a bruised cheekbone. It comes flooding back to him in an instant.

George thinks he would cry if he had the energy.

John just wraps his arms tighter around him. “It’s okay, baby. Everything’s gonna be okay.” He pulls away ever so slightly to look George in his non-swollen eye. “You could have really hurt us last night. You know that, right?” His voice sounds so sweet and gentle that George is certain they’ve reached a breaking point. This is it. This is when everything gets better again.

“If you would have actually killed yourself, I could’ve gone to jail.”

And even if you did, by some miracle, love him, he sure as hell doesn’t love you.

“I could’ve gotten in so much trouble, baby. Because no one understands us. They don’t get our relationship. But you get it, don’t you?”

“Yeah,” George mumbles. “I get it.”

“You know I love you, right?”

George looks up into dark, almost tearful eyes. *Right?*

“Right.”

“Good boy,” John murmurs, pressing a soft kiss to George’s hair. “Now promise me you’ll never do anything that stupid again, okay?”

“Okay,” George whispers, feeling like a child being scolded.

“Good.” John untangles himself from George’s hold and George is left alone in a bed that suddenly feels ten degrees colder. John chuckles, almost to himself, and mutters, “If there was ever anything I was glad you screwed up...”

He’s almost out the door when he turns and reminds George, “You should probably clean up your mess now or the blood might stain the tile.”

- - -

Today at 6 P.M.

>george< hey, sorry I've been offline today. I can call now if you want.

Dream hardly scans the message before calling.

"Hey, George, I'm really glad I got a chance to talk to you," Dream rattles, speech rehearsed a million times over in his head. "I just wanted to say that I'm really, really sorry about the other day. I screwed up. I should have never tried to guilt you into anything. It was incel-y and gross and I'm really fucking sorry about it. I know you're going through a lot right now and I swear I'll be there for you from now on. Always."

George is silent a moment, almost contemplative, before mumbling, "Thank you for apologising. And I'm sorry I couldn't..."

"George, you have nothing to apologise for." The line is silent again. This conversation is going exactly according to plan and yet it feels so wildly *wrong*.

"Well, uh, thanks anyway, I guess. I, uh, I do have to go now, but I just..." George fumbles for the right words. "Thank you. For being here for me."

"Of course." Dream wants so badly to end the call the same way he's done every call for years now, but he's not sure he's allowed anymore.

And maybe George senses it, hears the hesitation in the buzz of the phoneline, because he mumbles, "You can still say it. Like, platonically, or whatever." And that's as close as George will ever get to asking for affection.

With all of the heart he can muster, which, when it comes to George, is damn near infinite, "I love you, George."

"Bye."

"Bye."

Chapter End Notes

I exist solely to cause pain :)))

But on a serious note, please remember that this is a story about two deeply hurt and flawed characters. Neither of them did the right thing in this situation and you should not copy their actions to any degree. This does not make them "bad people," but their actions in this chapter and even in the last were immature and harmful.

First of all, you should never, EVER blame someone for not returning your romantic feelings toward them, especially not when they're going through something as painful as George is here. While it's entirely understandable to need to take time for yourself

to recover from the heartbreak, the way Dream did it here was cruel and unnecessary. Also, even confessing your love at a moment like that, when you know the other person is going through something painful is kind of an immature move.

But regardless of what Dream did, SOMEONE. ELSE. SELF. HARMING. IS. NEVER. YOUR. FAULT. Never. George is struggling with his own self-worth and he blamed Dream for it because he couldn't process everything that was going on. George self-harming was NOT Dream's fault. Anything written to that extent is George's distorted thoughts on the topic, not mine. George actively denied Dream's help getting out of the situation even before he knew that Dream was in love with him.

I just wanted to clarify all of that so nobody would feel in any way invalidated or hurt. Self-harm is a very serious topic and not something to be romanticised. This chapter actually took me way longer than usual to update and edit because it was very intense and emotional to write and I wanted to make sure I did it justice.

My DMs are always open at twitter.com/caseywond3r

All my love <3

P.S. I've realised that the format I've had throughout this entire book looks different on mobile than on desktop. The line spacing is really cramped and I don't like it. I'm going to go through right now and try to fix that, so if AO3 says I'm spamming updates tonight, sorry lol

P.P.S.S. It's been brought to my attention that I finally passed 10k words!! That's so cool!!!! Thank you all so much for coming along for the ride <33333

I've seen him, I've been him

Chapter Summary

Dream solicits more advice from Sapnap.

Chapter Notes

tw: vague mentions of abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream and George are on speaking terms again, but it's different than it was before. Awkward, forced, like school children with a crush. George says that things have been better lately, that there haven't been any big fights since the one he'd gotten the bruises from, but he still refuses to turn on his camera. Dream wants to push, but he's afraid to push too hard and lose George altogether. It's a delicate balance, and it makes Dream sick.

"I don't know what to do, Sap," Dream groans, flopping onto the bed. He absently wonders when he last got a full night's sleep. He can't remember. "I want to be there for him, but I don't know how. I just don't want to push him too hard, ya know, but I also don't just want to sit there and watch him get the shit beat out of h—."

"Dude," Sapnap interjects. "You know I love you, right?"

"Uh, yeah? Why?"

"Because I'm glad you're talking to someone about this, but I don't really think I'm the someone you should be talking to."

"Well," Dream scoffs. "I can't exactly talk to George about all this."

"Obviously. That's not what I'm suggesting."

"Then, what are you suggesting?"

Sapnap takes a breath, steeling himself for the push-back. "I think you should start seeing a therapist."

"Sap," Dream huffs. "I'm not the one with getting Chris Brown-ed here. I don't need a therapist."

"No, you just need me to sit here and listen to your aimless complaints for hours on end while occasionally piping in with unprofessional and probably inaccurate advice."

Rage simmering just below the surface of Dream's tongue, "You don't want me to talk to you? Fine. Whatever. I thought you were supposed to be there for me, but I guess not."

"Clay, would you stop being a dick for like thirty seconds?" he snaps. "I am here for you. I will

always be here for you. You're my best friend. But I can't help you through this. I don't know anything about any of this. I can't give you good advice. I can't help George.

"But there are people out there who can," Sap rambles on. "People who want to help you and who know how. You need to set a good example for George. So, grow a pair and get some professional help."

Dream bites his tongue hard to keep from lashing out. He takes a breath and admits, "Maybe you're right."

"I'm gonna be honest here, man. It's been hard for me to even talk to George these past couple of weeks because I know I can't let on that that I know."

"I know," Dream mumbles. "I shouldn't have told you as much as I did. I knew it wasn't my story to tell." He pauses, then confesses, "I'm scared, Sap. I don't know what to do anymore."

"Neither do I. That's why you need professional help. I can look up a few names and send them to you, okay?"

Dream sighs, rubbing his fists harshly into his forehead. "Okay. I'll give it a try."

"Good," Sapnap beams. "I'm proud of you, man."

Dream smiles, small and broken, the start of a new spring breaking through the ice. "I'm sorry I put all of this on you, Sap. I know it wasn't fair. But thank you for being there for me anyway. And thank you for pushing me to do the things I need to do, even when I'd rather not."

"Hey, they don't call me Tough Love Daddio for no reason."

Dream wheezes, his first real laugh in a while. "You're such an idiot."

"Yeah, whatever. I'll get those names to you tonight. Make sure you eat something, alright?"

"Alright, Sap. Give Karl a kiss for me."

"Ay!" Sap squeals. "Get your own man!"

Dream laughs, somewhere between bitter and acquiescent. "Wish I could."

Chapter End Notes

YALL WE JUST GOT 5K HITS IM GONNA CRY THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH
FOR READING ILYSM AKSJDNKSJABD

In other news, this fic is about halfway over. I've set the tentative number of chapters at 24, but that's subject to change.

Also, we absolutely stan Sapnap setting healthy boundaries for himself and his friends. King shit.

take a seat, pull up a chair

Chapter Summary

Dream goes to therapy.

Chapter Notes

tw: brief mention of physical abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“It’s a pleasure to meet you. I’m Dr. Romero, but you can call me Maria.”

Dream's therapist is a middle-aged, Latina woman with platinum blonde hair swept up in some overcomplicated updo. She wears a pronoun pin on her ironed blouse. She acts welcoming. She feels intimidating.

“It’s nice to meet you, too,” Dream says, extending a hand for her to shake. “I’m Clay.” After so many years of being called Dream, it’s almost weird to say. To think he has a persona outside of the internet.

The room is cold when he walks in. A chill runs down his spine, a single tremor through his extremities. His fingertips tingle with the urge to pick at themselves.

Dream takes a hesitant perch on the edge of the worn-out leather sofa. He plants his feet firm on the ground, evenly spaced, like he’ll need to jump up and run at a moment’s notice.

“How are you doing today, Clay?”

“I’m doing good,” he replies, but it’s rushed, tense.

“You seem nervous.”

“Yeah, I guess. This is all...” Dream gestures awkwardly around him. “A lot.”

Maria chuckles. “Yeah, I get that sometimes. First time then?”

“Yeah. I mean, I went to a psychiatrist when I was younger. I have ADHD so I was on meds for that. But, uh, yeah. I stopped going after I finished high school. And even when I was going, it was kinda just, ya know, like, for the ADHD stuff. Uh, my friend actually recommended I start going to this. He, uh, he was worried, I guess. About me. Like, nothing’s really wrong with me or whatever, just...” Dream catches himself rambling and stops short, embarrassed, but Maria doesn’t look annoyed. She’s just sitting there, leaned forward, attentive. She’s listening.

“Alright then, Clay. Why are we here today?”

Dream swallows hard against the desert of his throat, presses clammy palms into his jeans.

“I’m not really sure, I guess.”

“I don’t believe that,” Maria says simply.

“I didn’t—I mean, this whole thing wasn’t even my idea, so...”

“So you’ve said. Your friend recommended you start, yeah? Why?”

God, fuck, Dream knows this is what he came here for, but he just can’t bring himself to say it. It was hard enough to talk to Sap about, let alone this complete stranger who he’s still not entirely sure he can trust. He reminds himself that, unless this middle-aged intellectual is actually a diehard Dream stan, she’ll never connect the dots, but it still feels risky.

“My friend—Uh, my other friend, not the one who recommended I start coming here—Sapnap, that’s the one who started coming here, uh, but—Yeah, George. That’s the other friend. He, uh, he lives in England but we talk online. And he’s not, like, a catfish or anything. Like, I have IRL friends who’ve met him IRL, but I just haven’t yet. But, uh, yeah, so George he’s... He has this, uh...” Dream drifts off, like saying it out loud will solidify it in reality. “God, this feels so weird and dumb to talk about because it’s really not a real problem, not for me, at least. I’m only here because Sapnap was tired of hearing me talk about it and I guess he was kind of worried about me or whatever because I wasn’t really, like, taking care of myself, I guess. Like forgetting to eat and sleep and stuff.” He studies Maria, but she’s still listening attentively, without judgment. Maybe he can push his luck. “So, yeah, uh, George, he has this boyfriend who, like... Hits him. Or whatever.”

Maria just nods for a second, trying to catch up with Dream’s rambling. “Okay. Your friend is in an abusive relationship. And that’s why you’re here?” she asks, still sounding a little confused.

“Yeah, I guess so. I just... I don’t really know how to help him.”

“You feel like you need to help him?”

“I mean, yeah. Of course I do. He’s my best friend.”

“You sound like a good friend,” she hums.

“Clearly not good enough if he felt like he had to go and date some loser who beats the shit out of him.”

Maria considers Dream for a moment. “Do you blame yourself for what’s happening to George right now?”

“I mean, yeah. He wouldn’t be in that situation if he’d felt more loved, right? I mean, that’s what I kept seeing online. That people in abusive relationships just have really low self-esteem and that’s why they stay.”

“That’s definitely a common trait amongst victims of abuse. But that doesn’t mean you’re to blame for it.”

“Okay, well.” Dream huffs, already annoyed at the way his barely-coherent thoughts are being picked apart. “Maybe it’s not my fault, necessarily, but I could have done something to stop it.”

“Go back.”

“What?”

“Go back to the first part of that sentence,” Maria instructs. “Yes, Clay, maybe you could have done something to stop it, but so could’ve fifty other people. It’s not your fault, Clay.”

Dream tries to let that sink in before confessing, “I just don’t know what to do. He won’t leave him. I tried everything. I tried...” He drifts off, unsure how to tell that part of the story without sounding like completely pathetic.

Maria purses her lips and poses the gentle question, “Clay, are you in love with him?”

Dream nods, pitifully.

“I know it’s hard to feel so helpless when someone you love is hurting. But George has to make his own decision to reach out for help. You can’t fix this for him. But you did a really good thing by coming here, by showing him that it’s okay to reach out for help.”

“I just want him to be okay. I just want him to be safe and happy. I would do anything to make him feel safe and happy.”

“You can’t fix anyone if you’re breaking yourself, Clay. You said you’re barely eating, barely sleeping. If you spend all of your energy worrying about your friend, you’ll lose all of yourself. You need to learn to set boundaries within your relationships.”

Dream hesitates, picking his cuticle until it bleeds. “What if he needs me?”

“Then you have to trust that he will reach out. You can’t keep burning the wick at both ends like this.”

Dream feels the exhaustion flooding him, the adrenaline of the morning fleeing his body. He feels almost... calm.

“Next time you talk to him, I want you to assess your own mental state first. I want you to ask yourself if you’ve eaten recently, if you’ve slept enough, if you’re feeling generally okay enough within yourself to deal with his problems on top of your own.”

“And if I’m not feeling okay enough?”

“Then, I want you to practice saying, ‘I’m not in a good headspace to be there for you right now.’”

“But...” Dream drifts off, already knowing what she’ll say. But he has to ask anyway. “I’m the only one he talks to. If I’m not there for him, then how will he cope?”

“Clay, right now, he isn’t coping. He’s staying in a dangerous situation because he’s afraid to leave. And while that’s common and understandable, he has to choose to get out of that situation before you can truly help.”

“I *want* to help.”

“Then set a good example. Take care of yourself.”

“What if things get worse?”

“Then maybe he’ll leave. Until then, the best you can do is be a stable, healthy friend for him.”

Dream considers everything she’s said. The idea of sleeping through one of George’s calls makes his hands shake and his throat close up. And maybe that’s the problem. “Okay. I’ll give it a try.”

“Good. I’m proud of you, Clay, and I’m sure your friend would be, too.”

God, I hope so.

Chapter End Notes

Ahhhh this didn't feel right at all but as much as I edited it, it still felt awkward. So, here you go.

I ended up waiting to post this until the next chapter was written cos this feels like such a filler chapter that I almost feel guilty posting it. So the next chapter should be up in a few hours and I promise it will be more exciting. Dream is about to find out about things.....

Comments give me happy chemicals <333

I've felt the same way

Chapter Summary

George has a great stream... until his viewers get a little too perceptive.

Chapter Notes

tw: panic attack, mentions of suicide attempt, effects of self harm (scars), vague suicidal ideation

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George rarely streams anymore. He just doesn't have the time. John likes things a certain way, meaning George spends a lot of time cooking and cleaning. And when he's not tidying up, John's usually home, and he requires almost constant attention. And when George isn't tidying up and he's isn't with John, he's almost always sleeping. He sleeps a lot now—more than before, even. He doesn't like to be awake anymore.

But this week has been good. It's been about a month since... everything... and John is good, so George is good, too. For the first time in months, there are no bruises littering his pale skin—aside from the ones on his hips, but he'd learned to live with those if it meant the rest of him could stay safe. So, not only did he have the energy to stream today, but he could turn on his face cam, too.

He sets up a last minute stream with Dream and Sapnap. It's just GeoGuesser but something about it feels freeing. The conversation is playful and lighthearted, and for an hour, George feels truly happy. And not because John is happy, but because John doesn't exist. In this moment, it's just like it was before George got himself into this stupid mess. It's just the Dream Team again.

George almost wonders if it could ever be like this for real. If this feeling of welcomeness, of wantedness could ever last.

When the stream ends and Sapnap leaves the call, Dream whispers to him, a custom grown more and more sincere over the years, now bearing so much heart that neither one of the can stand it, "I love you, George."

George whispers back, into his cold, empty apartment, "I know."

- - -

Dream wakes the day after the stream feeling good. He's been sleeping right and eating right and taking care of himself lately. Sapnap says he's proud of him.

Still feeling lazy, Dream unplugs his phone and absentmindedly opens Twitter. He sees his homepage flooded with loving messages, all tagged **#WeLoveYouGogy**.

Dream's heart warms at the sight. Having a spotlight on your life 24/7 may be exhausting but, at

the end of the day, it's always nice to feel loved.

He clicks the hashtag trying to find the source. The stans tend to freak out over the most random things, so there was really no guessing what exactly had set this off. *Probably his smile*, Dream bets. *He really does have a precious smile*. Sitting up, he keeps scrolling until he finds what appears to be the original post.

His blood runs cold.

marshall (he/they) @dr3amt3am3dits • 4h

tw // s*lf h*rm

[thread]

|

hey so I'm not super sure what to do right now because I don't want to invade George's privacy at all but I was trying to clip something from his latest stream and.....

The next post in the thread contains a three second long, half-speed video clip. It's so quick, Dream's not even sure how OP saw it to begin with, but now that's he's looking for it, it's sure as hell there.

The sleeve on George's sweater slips down as he runs his hand through his hair. An angry, red scar stands in stark contrast to his porcelain skin.

marshall (he/they) @dr3amt3am3dits • 4h

as someone who has s*lf h*rm'd in the past, there are two things about this that bother me (aside from the obvious)

|

first of all, this scar looks really, really recent. like, within the month if I had to guess. also, I went back through his other videos just to check and he's never had any scarring there before.

|

second, that scar is vertical. for those of you who don't know, typically vertical cuts are su*cide attempts, not just s*lf h*rm.

|

idk if anyone else noticed or if this is disrespectful to point out, but I'm really worried for him. I hope that he's doing okay and that he knows it's okay to take a break if he needs one. #WeLoveYouGogy

Everything slows down, but the speed of the Earth hurtling around the Sun is painful, dragging. Words, mutters to no one get trapped in Dream's throat as he watches his entire world crumble around him.

Dream must watch that video ten times over before it really hits him. *George tried to kill himself.*

Dream's thoughts spiral from there.

He didn't even tell you.

He didn't feel safe enough to tell you how badly he was hurting.

You knew how badly he was hurting. He shouldn't have needed to tell you.

You should have done more. Something, anything to get him out of that situation.

You're so stupid. Such a stupid fucking coward, never good enough.

He's lucky he doesn't love you. Nobody should love you when you're too fucking pathetic to help the people you love.

What are you doing right now, huh? Sitting here, feeling sorry for yourself? He's out there right now, probably reading the exact same Tweet you just read, freaking the fuck out, maybe even doing it again, and you're sitting here feeling sorry for yourself.

Dream practically falls out of bed, pacing the room and pulling at his hair. He tries to remember how to breathe. He can't.

Shaking fingers press George's contact.

No answer.

Try again.

No answer.

He tries again, muttering to himself, "Come on, come on, pick up the damn phone."

On the other end of the line, groggy but subsisting, "Dream?"

- - -

George hears his phone ringing on his nightstand. He could have sworn he'd set it to Do Not Disturb before bed. He groans and rolls over in bed, reaching out sleepily for his lover, only to find the bed empty, cold. George glances at the window, seeing even through the blinds that the sun is well into the sky. John must've left for work already.

The phone stops ringing for less than fifteen seconds before it starts up again. Agitated and wanting nothing more than to go back to sleep, George rolls over to silence his phone. He sees Dream's name lighting up the screen, though, and his heart stops.

Dream wouldn't risk spam-calling George this early in the morning. He knows how much trouble George could get into. Something's wrong.

George answers the phone. "Dream?"

"George! Oh, thank god, okay, fuck, okay," Dream mumbles, more to himself than George. "Have you been on Twitter today?"

Well, that's never a good sign. "Uh, no, I just woke up. Why?" George asks, putting the call on speaker and opening Twitter.

"Don't," Dream warns. "Don't go on yet. I just... Fuck, George, why? Why did you... Why would you do that to yourself?"

"Do what to myself? Dream, you're not making any sense."

"On the stream yesterday, your sleeve slipped down. Everyone saw." Dream's voice falls impossibly quieter. "I saw."

And in that instant, George wishes he didn't have to die. He wishes he'd never existed at all.

Chapter End Notes

I've been getting a lot of comments lately from people saying that this fic helps them cope with their own trauma or to feel more understood and honestly, that makes me so happy to hear.

I originally wrote this to cope with my own trauma and a lot of the scenes are actually based off of my own personal experiences. I never actually thought it would pick up like it has. But when it did, and when I started to realise that other people felt validated by it, it was really cathartic. It helps me fight off that "nothing you do will ever matter" feeling I tend to get. Y'all have genuinely renewed my love for writing.

I hope you're all doing well and if you ever need anything, DMs are always open at twitter.com/caseywond3r

<33333

I've lost my sense of hope.

Chapter Summary

Dream tries to keep his cool. George tries to break him down.

Chapter Notes

tw: suicidal ideation, mentions of attempted suicide

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I have no idea what you’re on about.”

“Oh, come on,” Dream scoffs. “Don’t bullshit me right now, George. I’m tired of it.”

George feels the panic setting in, ice in his fingertips, cotton on his tongue. “No idea what you’re talking about. Bye.”

“Don’t you dare hang up the phone,” Dream growls. “George, I can’t keep doing this. This hot-and-cold game. I can’t only ever be here when you need me. I need *you* right now, George.”

George hesitates, his thumb hovering over the End Call button. “Dream, please,” he whimpers. “I don’t wanna talk about it.”

“Too fucking bad, George. I’ve been trying to give you your space but clearly, that isn’t helping, so now I’m gonna stick my nose in it. Why would you do that to yourself, man?”

“I don’t know!” George snaps. “I don’t fucking know, okay? I was pissed off and hurting and I did something stupid, okay? That’s it! That’s all it was! So just leave it the fuck alone!”

“No, George, that’s not good enough. You don’t just get to slice your fucking wrists open and then tell me to fuck off. That’s not how this works.”

“Oh, really?” George demands. “‘Cause you had a pretty easy time telling me to fuck off after I told you I didn’t love you.”

“What the *fuck* does that have to do with anything?”

And George just starts laughing, manic almost, so devoid of emotion, yet brimming with it, overflowing. “When do you think I did it, Dream?”

The line goes mournfully silent for a moment before Dream, restraint thick in his voice, asks, “Are you saying this is my fault?”

Something inside of George screams, begs him not to burn this bridge, but the rest of him wants so desperately for someone else to experience the pain he feels within himself. He wonders absently if this is how people like John are made. “If the shoe fits.”

Another piercing silence. Almost robotically, “George. I’m going to hang up right now. I am not leaving you for a prolonged period of time like before and we will discuss this when I get back, but I am not in a good headspace to be there for you right now.”

“Oh, yeah,” George scoffs, feeling the desperation rise up inside of him. “Run away when I need you. Just like you always do.”

“George, I need to go. Just tell me that you aren’t going to hurt yourself when I’m gone and we can call again in a few hours to talk about this.”

“No. No,” George whimpers, tears rising in his eyes, lump puncturing his throat. “You can leave if you want to but I’m not promising anything, ever again.”

“Goddammit, George!” So careful lately not to raise his voice, Dream finally snaps. “I am trying my absolute goddamn best to help you out here but you are making this as difficult as you possibly can! Do you have any fucking idea what you did? Do you have a single fucking clue? Why would you ever fucking think that you could just—Jesus Christ, I just—”

“What? You just what, Dream? You’d be sad?” George mocks. “You’d cry?”

“Yes, you fucking idiot! I would fucking cry! I would lose fucking everything! I would probably fucking follow you!”

George’s heart pounds in his chest, tainted with sick, sadistic satisfaction and the most gut-wrenching agony. Softer now, he cuts in, “Dream, that wasn’t what I—”

“What? You don’t like that image? Me, bleeding out into an empty house? You don’t like the image of me dying, young and stupid and all alone? Well, guess what, George? I don’t like it either!”

“Dream, please—”

“No. No, you wouldn’t let me help and you wouldn’t let me go, so fuck you, I’m talking now,” Dream snarls. “Do you have any fucking idea what it would have done to me if you’d actually died? Do you have any fucking idea?”

“Dream, stop it,” George pleads.

“Can you even imagine, behind that thick fucking skull of yours, me waking up in the morning and seeing that fucking headline? Because that’s how I’d find out, ya know. Through a fucking headline. I would open up Twitter and see your perfect fucking face without any of the bruises that I see when I close my eyes and I would read the headline and there would be *nothing*. *Nothing* I could do or say to bring you back. I would be *nothing* without you, George, and I’m telling you right now, I don’t know if I could survive that.”

“Stop it, stop it, stop it,” George mutters, burying his head in his hands, pulling at his thinning hair.

“I love you more than anything else in this world, George. You are my heart and my soul and I would die for you in a heartbeat. But I will not sit here while you blame me for the situation *you* refuse to get yourself out of!”

“Dream, please,” George sobs. “Please, I’m sorry. Please just stop. Please just stop.”

Dream softens at George’s choked rambling. “I’m sorry,” he mumbles, voice eerily restrained once more. “But I told you I wasn’t in the headspace to deal with this right now. I need time, George.

And I'm not trying to abandon or hurt or punish you. I just—I can't do this right now. I need time to process this. I will text you when I can. Are you going to be okay until then?"

George is silent for a minute, barely processing Dream's question. "I won't hurt myself."

"Okay, George."

George waits an infinite moment for Dream to tell him he loves him, a luxury he's grown too reliant on these past few weeks. It takes him a pathetically long time to realise that the call has ended without so much as a goodbye.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm a little not sorry I get a sadistic pleasure from this I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm

Also, I hope this kind of displayed the way that being in a toxic relationship can affect your ability to make other meaningful relationships. George isn't a cruel person, but he says cruel things because in an attempt to push some of his own pain onto others. Meanwhile, Dream is learning how to set healthy boundaries for himself. What a king.

Comments give me happy chemicals (though I'm not sure I deserve happy chemicals after what I've just done /j)

<33333

lose faith in his pace, his stamina and grace

Chapter Summary

George processes the day's events and makes a life-altering decision.

Chapter Notes

tw: disassociation, mentions of disordered eating, unhealthy weight loss (no numbers), emotional abuse, implied dubcon/noncon

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

John pokes his head through the doorframe to see George curled in on himself, staring blankly at the wall before him, eyes red and puffy.

“Babe? Are you sick?” John asks with uncharacteristic concern.

George says nothing.

“George?” John takes a seat on the edge of the bed, pressing the back of his hand to George’s forehead. “Are you okay?”

“They saw,” he croaks out, still staring at the blank wall ahead of him.

“Who saw what?” he asks, running gentle fingers through George’s unkempt hair.

“The viewers. Streamed yesterday. Sleeves rode up. Saw the cuts.”

George feels the loving hand in his hair, tense, gripping the strands tighter. “What did you say about it?”

“Nothing,” George mutters. “Didn’t say anything about it yet. Won’t say anything about you.”

John releases George’s hair, turning away in disgust as the tears start flowing silently down George’s face once more. “You’re more trouble than you’re worth, ya know that?”

“I know.”

“It’s time for dinner,” John grumbles, standing to change out of his work clothes. George knows the moment is over. Thirty seconds of comfort to cling to. He stands and makes his way to the kitchen to start John’s dinner.

- - -

When John crawls into bed that night, stalking George like a predator his prey, George thanks whatever God may be out there that he hadn’t eaten all day. He knows that if he had, he would have been sick the instant he felt John’s hands on bare skin.

George doesn't resist, doesn't even bother saying no. He knows it won't matter anyway. And even if he could stop it, he's not sure that he'd want to. A part of him likes the pain, appreciates the penance for all the trouble he's caused.

It's not until George is finally drifting off to sleep, feeling sticky and used, that he really sees it. He sees the man he used to be, brazen and content. He misses that man dearly.

He wonders how he withered away into bruises on thighs and scarring on wrists. He wonders if he could still turn back or if it's too late for him.

He wraps his arms tighter around himself, sobbing silently as his fingers dig into his rib cage. He doesn't want to spend the rest of his life like this. But he doesn't want to die tonight, either.

If you want, I can fly out. Or you can come here.

Maybe it's time George let somebody love him.

Chapter End Notes

I know this was a really short chapter and I'm kind of ticked because we've been building up to this moment for so long now, but I have to talk about something important:

I'm sure you all saw what happened yesterday on Twitter. I don't want to discuss it here as I really don't know what to think or believe at the moment. But I do want to talk about how it will affect my current works. I won't be taking them down because I know that they've helped people to cope with their own trauma, but if the video clip is verified, then I really don't think I'll feel comfortable continuing them.

Unfortunately, I'm fairly certain that the video will remain unverifiable, meaning we won't know for sure whether or not Dream really said what he's accused of saying. If that does end up being the case, then I will probably continue this fic.

In the meantime, I will be taking a short break from all works (two or three days, at the most) to collect my thoughts and see how everything plays out.

My DMs are always open at both
twitter.com/caseywond3r
and
caseywond3r.tumblr.com

I love and appreciate every single one of y'all. Stay safe <333

EDIT: this author's note was written a few hours before I posted the chapter, but it looks like some new stuff has come up pretty much clearing Dream. So, unless something else comes up, I will be continuing this story. I'm still planning to take a short break for mental health reasons, but I'll be back soon to give you more pain :))))

has he seen more to this life?

Chapter Summary

George lets Dream in on his plan to get away.

Chapter Notes

tw: bruises

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Today 12:07

>dream< I'm ready to talk when you are

George calls immediately, almost shocked when Dream answers. George mumbles, small but reverent, “You came back.”

Voice devoid of emotion, exhausted, Dream says, “I told you I would.”

There’s an awkward pause, so many words left unspoken, spoken words left unmeant, lingering in the atmosphere, stealing away what little air is left between them.

“I thought about what you said,” George starts

“Which part?”

"I can't stay here. It isn't safe for me. It isn't good for me." George pushes out a harsh breath, and with it, the words he’s been playing in his head, testing on his tongue since late last night. "I'm leaving."

Hesitantly, Dream murmurs, “Really?”

“Really. I’m leaving. I don’t know how, I don’t have a car, I’d have to move back with my parents, but I’ll figure it out. I’m leaving. Tonight.”

Dream swears, a vulgar prayer. “I’m so happy for you, man. I’m so fucking happy for you. Anything you need, anything at all, I’m here. I wish I were there, but I’m here and I’ll do anything I can to help you.”

“I need to pack,” George says. “Will you stay on the line while I do?”

“Of course.” A pause, and a hesitant request. “Can we turn on our cameras? I miss seeing you.”

George glances in the mirror. His face is clean but his neck is mottled with bruises. “Yeah, give me a second,” he mumbles, throwing on a mock-neck sweater. The bruises are still visible on the

upper half of his neck, but they're hidden easier in the shadows of his chin. He wanders back toward his phone, Dream's gorgeous face already lighting up the screen. "Hi," he ventures, turning on his own camera.

A slow, proud smile spreads across Dream's face. "Hi," he rasps, unshed tears stifling the word.

The unspoken words, the spoken untruths, they're all there, they still hang in the air between them, but they aren't suffocating anymore. They're just a part of the past, a part of the present even, but they aren't a part of the future. Not if George and Dream don't want them to be.

"I love you," Dream whispers.

Drunk on the adrenaline, George whispers back, "I know."

Chapter End Notes

I'm back! Thank you guys for being so sweet and understanding about me taking a short break from writing. I have ADHD so I tend to get a little too involved in my hyperfixations, to the point of it being detrimental to my mental health, so I had to force myself to take a step back. But I'm back now and better than ever :)))

aLSO APPARENTLY WHILE I WAS AWAY WE PASSED 500 KUDOS??? ARE YOU JOKING????? I LOVE YOU ALL SO MUCH YOU LITERALLY MEAN THE WORLD TO ME AND I WILL CRY ON THE SPOT LITERALLY GIVE ME A HUG RIGHT THE FUCK NOW

Anyways, hope you enjoyed the short, fluffy chapter. I have no evil plans to rip away your happiness right when I've given it to you, trust me >:))

yes, I don't know what I'll fuckin' do

Chapter Summary

John comes home early.

Chapter Notes

tw: mentions of attempted suicide, manipulation, emotional/verbal abuse, physical abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

True to his word, Dream stays on the line while George packs. He feels a little less useless like this, keeping a watchful eye over his friend.

"You always talk about moving here," Dream muses. "Why not come now?"

George pauses for a second, contemplating. "I have been wanting to travel there for some time now."

Dream pushes further. "My place is plenty big enough for the two of us. Plus, Patches is just dying to meet you."

"Oh." George sounds suddenly off-put. "I wouldn't want to invade your space or anything. But I'm not opposed to the idea of moving to the States. Maybe I could find an apartment nearby."

Dream tries to backtrack, to revert back to their casual banter to alleviate some of the hesitance hanging thick in the call. "What? Afraid you wouldn't be able to resist me?"

George snorts and opens his mouth to say something snarky, but he stops cold.

All of the blood drains from his face and he drops the sweater he was holding onto the hardwood floor.

"George? What's wrong? Is he—" Dream doesn't bother finishing his sentence when he sees George rush over to where his phone is propped up against his nightstand.

George deafens and flips the phone over, so his video is black. "Stay with me," he whimpers, just seconds before the bedroom door swings open.

A beat of silence.

"What the fuck is all this?"

George stammers for an explanation but finds nothing coherent.

"You were gonna leave me?" John demands. "You were gonna up and leave me, just like that?"

Heavy feet clomp closer to the nightstand where Dream lives, as helpless as the walls that have stood witness to so many months of horror.

“I wasn’t—”

“Don’t you fucking lie to me, George. I think you’ve lied enough.” There’s a thud, like something heavy falling to the floor. George whimpers.

“Why? Why were you gonna leave me, George? Because you can’t handle a couple of smacks? Are you really that fucking pathetic?” John demands. “I thought you could take a fucking punishment, slut. I didn’t know I had to treat you with fucking kid gloves.”

Dream’s mind reels, clambering for something to say, something to do.

He clings to the word “slut” somehow. It’s not the worst part of what’s been said—not by a long shot—and maybe that’s why it’s the most important part. It’s the only aspect of the ranting that Dream can grab hold of, can chew on and swallow and move past.

Dream has never been a violent person but, if he were there right now, he can swear on everything he’s ever known that John would feel every ounce of the pain he has dealt.

“It’s not like that and you know it,” George snaps, but his tone doesn’t force the fury that it should.

“Really? Then what the fuck is it like, huh? What’s my crime?” John laughs bitterly, like he knows he’s won already. “I love you. I take care of you. I cleaned you up when you cut your fucking wrists open. Could’ve left you to bleed out on the bathroom floor there, but I didn’t, did I? I’ve tried to be nicer, even, just so you wouldn’t go and do anything stupid like that again. But nothing is ever fucking good enough for you, is it, George?”

Dream can almost hear George’s resolve breaking down.

“I love you more than anything else in this world and you know that!” John rages on. “You just wanna hurt me. All you ever do is hurt people. You think anyone else would put up with you this long? With all your crying and whining, all your ‘woe is me’ bullshit? Why don’t you go, then? Go out and try to find anyone else who’ll love you like I love you.”

“George. Come on, man,” Dream mumbles, somewhere between forgetting George can’t hear him and just praying that he can. “People do love you. Sappho, Beethoven, Shakespeare, you know they all love you. You know *I* love you. Fuck, come on, man. Don’t fall for this shit again.”

John carries on. *God, that bastard really loves the sound of his own voice, doesn’t he?* “Who else would put up with you like this? Look at you, shaking, sobbing, a pathetic fucking mess, all because you got caught throwing a temper tantrum? You’re lucky I got here before you did anything you’d regret.” A ringing smack deafens Dream. “Did you tell anyone what you were planning to do?”

George hesitates.

And then, with a heaving sob, he breaks. “I told my parents. I was going to go stay with them.”

“Fuck!” Dream pushes himself to his feet so abruptly that his desk chair goes flying behind him. He starts pacing, ripping the headphone jack from his computer. George’s trembling voice floods the room.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry…” Over and over, sobbing, he pleads, sounding more

breathless and pained with each passing second.

There's a conflict within Dream. The eternal battle between wishing he could see what was going on and thanking whatever God there may be that he can't.

"John. Wait, please," George begs. "Please. Just one minute."

"What? What the fuck could you possibly want now?"

George whispers something that Dream can't quite make out.

The gut-wrenching crunch of bone against bone.

"You stupid fucking—"

A deafening silence rings through Dream's office.

Call Ended

18:24

Chapter End Notes

The idea of Dream having to listen to George being beaten has been festering in my head for weeks now so I've decided to make it everyone's problem :))))

Also, I think I might have to rework the chapter titles bc I'm lowkey running out of lyrics ajsdnak I really didn't expect to keep up with this fic for long enough for it to matter

Comments give me happy chemicals <333

can he break me?

Chapter Summary

Dream tries his best to save George. George rejects his help entirely.

Chapter Notes

tw: panic attacks, vomiting (from anxiety), manipulation, emotional/verbal abuse, effects of physical abuse (bruises, blood), physical abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck,” Dream mutters, pacing circles around his bedroom. He dials 9-1-1, a painful reminder that George lives across the fucking Atlantic. He looks up the emergency number for England and dials that instead.

A monotone voice answers the call. “Emergency. Which service?”

“Police,” Dream huffs.

The line is swiftly transferred. “What is your emergency?”

“My friend...” *How do I even explain what I just heard?* “He’s—I was on the phone with him, and his boyfriend—his—his boyfriend walked in and—uh, he started—he started hitting him and—and I don’t—I don’t know what—”

“Where did this take place?” The operator interjects.

Dream gives her the address. He’s only sent a few packages there, but he knows it by heart nonetheless.

“The police are on their way. They should be there within five minutes.”

“Thank you. Thank you,” Dream groans before hanging up. The bile rises once more in his throat, but this time, he can’t swallow it down.

Staring down at the mess before him, he wonders if he’ll ever get the stain out of his carpet.

- - -

John’s palm is flattened over George’s throat when a knock sounds from the front door. John doesn’t budge, until a gruff voice calls out, “This is the police.”

There’s a moment, a brief moment, so out of place George could swear he’d imagined it, where John looks afraid.

Dreadfully, John walks toward the front door. George stays where he is on the floor, listening to

snippets of conversation.

If I don't cover for him, they'll take him away from me.

He was right when he said nobody else would want me. Even Dream would stop loving me eventually.

If I lose him, I'll be all alone.

Heavy boots make their way toward the bedroom. George feels panic bubbling just beneath the surface as he pushes himself into a standing position.

I can't let them take him from me.

"Babe?" John calls out. "These nice officers would like to speak with you."

The officers, tall and stocky, almost twin-like in their intimidating build enter the room

George runs through possibilities in his head as the officers speak. "We received a complaint from a friend of yours with concerns about a domestic dispute." *You already have bruises, so you can't just say he was lying.* "He claims that you were on the phone with him when Mr. Arkwright came in and began a physical altercation." *And Dream told him he heard John do it, so you can't just say you fell.*

You could... George hesitates at the thought. *Oh, that would work.*

George has been performing all his life. He's the best actor he knows.

It's time for a show.

George walks toward John and wraps his arms around his waist. "Yeah, that's right," he giggles.

The officers look between the pair in confusion.

"Poor Dreamie," George hums. "We probably scared him half to death, didn't we?" He presses a kiss to John's cheek before detaching himself.

George pushes past the humiliation of the situation and continues. "It's all consensual. Just a bit of BDSM to spice things up. Dream—the man who reported it, that is—just heard something he wasn't meant to hear. I should really call him to apologise."

The officers look stuck between discomfort and disinterest. They ask John to leave the room so they can question George one-on-one (well, two-on-one) about his safety. George tells them the same story. He feels the degradation burning in his chest, his throat tightening at the very thought of asking for this. But he does what he has to do. He can't let them take John away from him.

Once the officers leave, John comes back into the room and brushes the hair from George's forehead. A gentle kiss is pressed to his lips, hand slipping from his forehead to the back of his neck, combing almost lovingly through his hair. "Good job, baby. You did such a good job for me."

But John's grip on his hair tightens, and the kiss becomes violent, a show of teeth against a now-bloodied lip. "But you wouldn't have had to lie," he growls, "if you had just been good in the first place."

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I know that some of you are getting impatient for the fluff/comfort, and honestly, that's my bad. You were supposed to get a Dream-saves-George scene like two chapters ago but I added in some extra stuff that wasn't in the original outline. I actually adjusted the chapter numbers, too. Originally, this was meant to have roughly 24 chapters and I bumped it up to 27, tentatively.

If I'm super honest, I'm definitely stalling a bit, which is why this chapter might feel a little awkward. I kind of backed myself into a corner by not following my outline, so I'm trying to get back on track. So, please bear with me if this chapter wasn't the best. Next chapter should be back in sync with the outline.

Anyways, why I've been stalling. Two reasons:

1.) I don't have a whole lot of experience writing fluff/comfort. It's not as compelling to me so it's more difficult to write. That's why most of my stories are hurt/comforts with like 80% hurt, 20% comfort. To correct this, I've been writing Karlnap fluff as practice, so if you're interested in that, feel free to check it out.

2.) I'm really hesitant to get into the romance part of this. I've recently realised that I'm on the aromantic spectrum, so I don't necessarily know how to accurately portray romantic feelings. (This is also why I'm a whore for friends-to-lovers, because it's what I'm able to most relate to.) I've read enough romance to understand the feelings on a conceptual level, but I'm doubtful of my ability to accurately convey them. I'm sure it'll be fine, as I've written plenty of romance before, but I've never really had an audience before, so I guess I'm just nervous.

Anyways, you will get your comfort, I pinkie promise. I already have most of chapter 20 written, so it should be up within 24 hours. I expect the comfort to start in chapter 21.

Also, I changed the story quote/description. It's a quote from next chapter. So, enjoy the sneak preview at more pain :)))

P.S. I JUST REALISED WE REACHED 10K HITS!!!!!! I was kind of expecting to hit that before this chapter came out, but what I wasn't expecting was to surpass it by so much. Seriously, we went up like 2k hits!!! Y'all are incredible and I love you all so much <33333

can he break you?

Chapter Summary

George deals with the aftermath of his outburst. Dream knows what he has to do.

Chapter Notes

tw: vague suicidal ideation, victim blaming, manipulation (Stockholm syndrome-esque), emotional/verbal abuse, effects of physical abuse (bruises, blood, broken bones)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was bad.

George knows he should have some more poetic words to describe it, some skin-tingling, heart-wrenching account of the events but, if he's perfectly honest, he hardly remembers it. But the fuzzy throb in his nose and the dead ache in his skull tell him all he needs to know.

It was bad.

It was bad to begin with and it got so much worse after the cops left. Part of him wishes Dream hadn't called them; part of him clings to the concern. All of him wishes he'd hung up sooner. Or better yet, never called at all.

George comes to on the floor next to their bed, hair soaked through with blood and sweat. He lifts his head too quickly, a fuzzy ring washing over him. He flops back against the ground, wondering absently if he'll start crying again. He won't. He's too tired to cry. *Can you even cry with your eyes swollen shut?*

Slower this time, he props himself up on his elbows, surveying the damage. Fuzzy head, lots of blood. Probably a concussion. George has never been too skilled at physiology but he's pretty sure that can kill you if you don't see a doctor at some point. *Good*, he thinks. *Then, I won't be breaking my promise to Dream. It's a win-win.*

He lifts a shaky hand up to face, thumb swiping gently over his lip. *Same place it split before.*

There's a lot of blood around his nose, he realises. He brings two hesitant fingers up to the bridge. He winces and yanks them back the instant they make contact.

That's not gonna heal right, he muses. *No more Pretty Privilege George, I suppose.*

His fingers float higher, toward his eyes. He already knows they're swollen, but he wants to know how badly. When he touches them, the feeling is almost unrecognisable. Soft, cushiony. They curve out from his face like fish eyes.

He's almost glad they're so swollen. If he saw himself in a mirror right now, he thinks he might just

lose what little sanity he has left.

Maybe Dream would finally get his head out of his ass if he saw you like this. Pretty face removed from the equation, do you really think he'd still love you?

George pushes himself to his feet looking for his phone through the slits of his vision. He doesn't see it.

Yeah, I guess I deserved that.

"You're up."

Blood rushes in George's ears, his knees trembling, almost sending him back to the floor. "Yeah," he mumbles lamely.

John steps closer, calloused hand gripping his chin, narrowed gaze meeting an ice-cold stare. "Are you done throwing your little temper tantrum now?"

George swallows against the lump in his throat. "Yeah."

"Good," he scoffs, chucking George's chin. "You should call your parents. They're probably worried sick."

One supervised phonecall later and his parents believe it was just a run-of-the-mill fight with George getting a little too passionate as he has a tendency to do.

George hesitates, before he asks his next question, but the guilt burns inside of him like a bonfire, wild and roaring into the open abyss of the night sky. He has to at least try. "Can I call Dream, too? Or text him, even? Just to let him know that I'm okay?"

John stiffens. "Why?"

George licks his lips nervously. "Because he's probably really worried."

"Oh, baby," John coos, almost sweetly, stepping closer and resting his hands on George's hips beneath his shirt. "You really think he's worried about you? He just didn't want your blood on his conscience, love. That's it. That's why he called the cops. His civic duty is done.

"Besides," he adds, sounding almost pitiful. "Do you really think he wants to speak to you again after what you did?"

"I didn't... I didn't mean to do anything..."

"George." John's grip on his waist tightens, pressing into the everpresent bruises there. "You played him. You manipulated him into helping you make your little scene." He pauses and a depraved grin sweeps across his face. "I bet you told you you'd go to him, didn't you?"

George lets the silence incriminate him.

"Do you love him, George?" John asks, nails digging bloody crescents into soft, pale skin. George shakes his head violently. John leans closer, lips brushing against the shell of George's ear, sending a shiver down his spine. "Do you lust for him, George?"

George shakes his head again until his face meets John's open palm. "Don't. Fucking. Lie. To me."

"I'm not lying," George whispers, but he knows it's futile.

"He's a bad influence, ya know. Put all sorts of stupid thoughts into your head." He pauses, studying George's reaction for some miniscule sign of betrayal. "You're a bad influence on him, too. He loves you so much and all you ever do it hurt him. Tease him. Make him think he could have you, when all you'll ever really want is me."

John circles George like a shark, or maybe a farmer appraising a calf.

"I think you like it," he continues. "I think you like the hurt, the degradation. You know you deserve it. It makes you feel complete. Like penance for all the pain you bring." Standing behind George now, John leans in and peppers sickly kisses along his neckline.

Kiss.

"Beautiful."

Kiss.

"Beautiful."

He sinks his teeth in hard, bitter copper tumbling out.

"Sin."

And the worst of it is that he isn't wrong. George has grown to love the violence. To love the reminders it leaves on his skin. To love the pain that clears him of any thoughts unsuited for his simple, trophy-wife brain. He feels like nothing at all anymore and he's grown to love the feeling.

John stands back, admiring the new mark. He takes a step away.

"Go clean up, now. You look pathetic like that."

George walks toward the bathroom without another word.

- - -

"I know I said I wouldn't bug you about this anymore, but this isn't just me complaining this time, I promise."

Not the most comforting thing to hear immediately upon answering the phone.

"Clay? What happened? Are you okay?"

"George was gonna leave him," Dream says, in lieu of a response. "He was finally—He was finally gonna fucking leave him and—and then he—then he fucking came home while George was—while he was pack—packing and he started—and he started—and I was still on the phone and—Fuck, Sap, I heard everything. I had to listen while he—Oh, god, the sounds—and—"

"Hey, woah, okay," Sap interrupts. "Clay, buddy, you gotta slow down, okay? I don't know what you're talking about. George was gonna leave John and then he came home?"

"Yes, Sap, he came home and he beat the shit out of him while I was on the fucking phone. I—I fucking heard it," Dream shouts, voice shattering around the words.

"Oh, God." Sapnap mind scrambles for a next step, some fantastic little tidbit of advice, but he

comes up short. “Did you call the police already?”

“Yeah, of course. But I haven’t heard anything from him and it’s been like six hours and I don’t know what to do.”

“Fuck, okay, um,” Sapnap drifts off, searching desperately for an answer. “Well, legal shit takes a while. Maybe he’s still talking to them.”

“No. No, he would have called me. He would have wanted me to know that he was safe. He would have fucking called me.”

“Clay, I’m sure—”

“What if he’s dead?” Dream whispers it, like if he says it aloud the words might find their way to fruition. “What if that was the last time I ever spoke to him? What if the last words I ever hear from him were, in essence, him begging for his life?”

“Clay, stop it. You’re being ridiculous.” Sapnap wishes he believed himself. “George isn’t dead. He’s probably talking to the cops right now.”

“I have to do something,” Dream maunders, more to himself than anything. “I have to find something—have to find some way to help him. Can’t just—can’t just sit here and be—and be fucking useless.”

“Hey, Clay, I think you’re having a panic attack, okay? I need you to just take a breath and—”

“Can I call someone?” Dream carries on like he hadn’t even heard him, voice growing higher and faster with each shallow breath. “Do you think I can call someone? I know I’m not supposed to tell people—wasn’t even supposed to tell you, but—fuck, man, I can’t just sit here. Can’t just sit here and look fucking stupid and fucking—”

“Clay. Stop. Take a breath.”

“No. No, you don’t understand. You don’t fucking get it. He could be *dead*, Sap. He could be fucking *dead* and I wouldn’t even know it.”

“Clay, come on, man. You can’t help George if you pass out, okay?”

“I can’t fucking help him anyway!” Dream shouts. “Sapnap, can you even fucking imagine? Can you imagine if Karl was hurting, if he was in danger, and you couldn’t get to him? You couldn’t help him? Can you imagine hearing him beg for his life on the other end of a fucking phone line and knowing you couldn’t do shit to help? Knowing he could die on the fucking phone with you and you couldn’t do a single goddamn thing?”

Sap’s blood runs still at the thought.

“No,” he rasps. “I can’t imagine. I would lose my fucking mind.”

Dream breathless shouting turns into sobbing, mindless and destructive, all the air sucked from his lungs. “What do I do?” he pleads.

Sap just buries his head in his hands. “I don’t know. I don’t know, Clay. Everything is fucked. I don’t know.”

“I need to help him,” Dream begs, like Sapnap has any control over the situation. “I need to go to

him.”

Sap runs his hands over his face and mumbles, barely coherent, “Then, go to him.”

Dream stops short, his breath hitched in his throat. “That’s my only choice, isn’t it?”

“What?”

“I’m going to England.”

“Wait, Clay, look. I know you want to help, but—”

“But nothing. I need to help. I need to go to him.”

“Clay, look, I support you here, but why don’t you just take a minute first and figure out your gameplan. You can’t just show up to his house and risk *whatever* that bastard might do to either him or you.”

“I’ll think on the plane. I’m going to England. Now.”

And he hangs up without another word.

Sapnap falls back against the bed. *Why does terrible shit happen to good people?*

Karl hears the muffled sobbing and comes to check on him. He finds his boyfriend on his back, tears staining rosy cheeks, staring blankly up at the ceiling.

“Oh, Pandas,” he sighs, kneeling on the bed next to him. Sapnap curls into his body, head resting in his lap, and just cries. For minutes or maybe hours, he cries, inconsolable, until he has nothing left to give of himself.

“I love you,” he mumbles into Karl’s sweater.

Karl just keeps carding his fingers through his lover's hair, fighting off tears of his own. “I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, first of all, I was going to make an update yesterday saying I decided to cut this story short so this would be the last chapter and then just make a super angsty chapter where George commits the Big Die™, but I didn't because

- a.) I'm way too lazy to write an emotionally taxing chapter like that for a dumb prank
- b.) I was scared people wouldn't read far enough down to see that it was an April Fool's prank and I would lose readers lol

So, basically, I'm a saint. Everyone say, "Thank you, Casey!"

Secondly, yeah, I'm aware that karlnap bit at the end didn't add much to the chapter, but what can I say? I'm a Sap kinnie. Also, I kind of wanted to show the way that these sort of emotionally taxing situations affect everyone around you, not just those directly involved. Sapnap is such a sympathetic person/character and I feel like he would

genuinely feel so much pain at the thought of any of his friend's hurting like that. Plus, what Dream said about Karl... That was definitely my "oooooh this is super evil and I'm way too excited about it" line for this chapter.

Thirdly, ya know when you do something stupidly and, like, you know as you're doing it that it's stupid but you do it anyway because you, too, are stupid??? Hahaha yeahhhhh

Totally unrelated note, but I told my dad about this fic hahaha and he asked to read it hahaha and I actually let him hahahahahahahah

Anyways, that was last night while I was hella sleep-deprived and he hasn't even looked at me all day so now I'm emotionally vulnerable and absolutely holding back tears. Comment a <3 to cheer me up :)))

Yeah, I'll use my crippling anxiety for an algorithm boost, fuck you.

you know the way I can be

Chapter Summary

George and John spend the day rekindling their romance. George gets an unexpected visitor.

Chapter Notes

tw: effects of physical abuse (bruises), unhealthy weight loss (no numbers)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

John wakes George up with soft, flameless kisses dusted across his face, and a, "Good morning, baby."

George flinches, still too sleep-ridden to gauge John's mood. He stares into his soft blue eyes and sees love and warmth playing behind them. *It's a happy day.*

"Good morning," George hums, bringing a cold hand up to John's face, knuckles brushing gently over his sharp jawline.

"Let's go on an adventure," John whispers. "We can go down to Brighton and make a day of it. See the water, maybe go on the Ferris wheel? And then we can come home and make dinner together and watch one of those sappy romcoms you like so much. How does that sound, baby?"

A smile spreads across George's face, the first one in a while that isn't the product of a lie or a simple adrenaline rush. "I'd like that a lot."

He cranes his neck up for a kiss and John obliges. *I've missed this*, George thinks to himself. *The feeling of being loved.*

- - -

Dream has always been a pretty financially responsible guy; he doesn't waste money where it isn't necessary.

But getting to George has become necessary.

And not a single airport in a hundred-mile radius has an open flight to London earlier than tomorrow afternoon.

So, basically, Dream may or may not have just dropped thirty grand on a private jet.

Perks of having your private life plastered all over the Twitter Trending page; it pays well.

He hates flying, always has, but the anxiety of knowing he's eight miles up in the sky is drowned out by the knowledge that he's going to see George. After years of pining and weeks of worrying,

he's finally going to see him. He's finally going to be able to protect him.

He sits in the knowledge, soaks in it, and lets the adrenaline wash over him in waves as a toneless mantra plays over and over again in his head, so loud and vicious that the walls of his skull tremble around it.

Protect him. At the cost of anything else, at the cost of your life, protect him.

- - -

George screams as John pulls him closer to the shoreline, ice cold water washing over his toes.

They fall into each other laughing, George holding desperately to John's arm as he falls into the tide.

"Help!" he shouts as John's legs give out and they both tumble into the water.

They're soaking wet, hair a million different directions, clothes sticking to their bodies, accentuating the concave of George's stomach.

They look at each other and fall into another fit of laughter. John tackles George in a kiss, lips salty, tongues warm in contrast to the icy water dripping off of them.

They break apart when George's shivering becomes too severe to ignore. He finds that happens a lot lately.

They decide to head home early, too wet and cold to enjoy the carnival rides. Besides, the weird looks that strangers have been throwing at George's black and blue face are a hell of a mood killer.

When they get home, they shower together. George wishes it were more innocent, wishes John would massage the shampoo into George's hair and hold him under the spray of hot water, but he feels so grateful, so undeserving of the day they've had already that he doesn't even think of complaining.

He falls to his knees on the shower tile, and he carries the bruises it leaves with pride. A nonviolent fight. The struggle between light and dark, two sides of John's love for him, and the heart-wrenching grey in between.

- - -

By the time the plane finally touches down, Dream is so wired on adrenaline, on this base instinct to *protect* that he hardly remembers to grab the carry-on he threw together.

He hops in a taxi and gives the driver George's address.

"How far away is that from here?" Dream asks.

"About twenty minutes, if traffic is good."

Dream starts counting seconds.

- - -

"What do you want for dinner?"

John is pulling on sweatpants as he asks it, mellow and contented now.

"I dunno. Pasta?" George suggests, muffled by the towel he's tousling his hair with.

"Sounds good." John hums, walking to the kitchen. A second later, he calls out, "We're out of marinara. I can run to the store and get some."

George feels a vague panic setting in. "No, no," he calls back, quickly throwing on a t-shirt and stumbling out of the bedroom. "It's really okay. We can make something else." With a nervous laugh, he adds, "I probably shouldn't be eating that anyway."

"Don't be silly, babe. Everyone gets a cheat day, right?" John slips on his shoes. "You can make up for it tomorrow."

George's stomach churns at the thought of spoiling John's good mood by sending him out on an errand. "Are you sure you don't mind? It's really not a big deal if you're too tired or whatever."

John takes George's hands in his own, holding his gaze. "I want to do something nice for my boyfriend. These past few days have been really rough on us and I just want you to know that I'm not mad. I know you didn't mean to hurt me."

George schools his expression and manages a, "Thank you."

"You're welcome." John presses a chaste kiss to George's lips. "You know I love you, right?"

"I know," George whispers. "I love you, too."

John pulls away and grabs his keys off the hook. "Want me to pick up some Italian sausage while I'm out?"

"That would be good."

"Alright, I'll be back in twenty." John stands in the doorway and blows George a kiss. "Love you."

George's stomach flips like a lovesick teenager. "Love you, too."

George flops down on the couch the minute John is out the door, smiling fondly to himself.

Knock.

Knock.

Knock.

George groans as he pulls himself off the couch. "Forget your keys?" he calls out, walking to the front door. He pulls it open and,

"George."

Chapter End Notes

So, I wrote the outline for this chapter when I was, for legal purposes, totally, definitely not drunk at all. Y'all wanna see that outline?

"sugar daddy dream go brrr rent private jet to go to gogy. mr. steal yo man."

Also, this has been a PSA against the phrase "cheat day." Fuck that shit. You aren't cheating at anything by eating what you wanna eat. <33

Anyways, I know I've been spoiling y'all with daily updates for a while now, but these next few chapters are probably going to be on a schedule similar to this one, with two to three days between updates. There's a lot being packed into them, so be prepared. Also, peep the chapter numbers changing again aksdjsn this book just keeps getting longer lol

On a different note, I know I mentioned to y'all that I'm working on some KarlNap fluffshots for practice. I think it would be cool to try out co-writing, as I've never really done it before and I feel like it would be a really difficult challenge for me, as I tend to be a bit obsessive with my writing. So, if any of y'all would be interested in that, feel free to message me at:

twitter.com/caseywond3r

or

caseywond3r.tumblr.com

P.S. Everyone who thanked me last chapter for not emotionally torturing them is a fucking bottom, love y'all <33333

can he smoke more? can he fuck more?

Chapter Summary

Dream shows up at George's doorstep.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

There's so much Dream wants to say, standing there in front of the love of his life, bare and broken for him. But all the words wind together, twisted and corrupted, and all he can say is,

"George."

A name. A prayer. The blinding golden light of heaven's gates and the winding, thorn-filled path to hell's fire.

A look of dread plays at George's face. He grabs Dream's wrist harshly and pulls him inside, slamming the door behind him.

"What the hell are you doing here?" George demands.

"What am I—George, you dropped off the face of the fucking Earth. I thought you were dead."

"Yeah, well," George huffs. "I was busy."

"Yeah, I know. I'm sure the whole police thing took a long time and..." Dream's adrenaline wears off now that he knows George is safe and he really takes in George's appearance for the first time.

"My god..." he breathes, reaching up almost involuntarily to brush his knuckles over George's bruised cheekbone.

George flinches away from the touch and Dream yanks his hand back like it burns. "I'm sorry," Dream mumbles. "I just... I called as soon as you hung up. I didn't think it would be so bad."

"The swelling's gone down a bit." George says it like it's a good thing, but all Dream can think is, *It was worse.*

"I'm surprised they didn't take you to the hospital."

"I wouldn't let them." Dream squints at him, confused. "Dream... When the cops came... I didn't tell them anything."

Dream's heart stops. *No. There's no fucking way.* "What?"

"When the cops came," George tries again. "I didn't tell them about what happened. I didn't want them to take him away."

"You..." Dream drifts off, struggling to pull a coherent thought from his muddled brain. "George, you said it yourself. He isn't safe. He isn't good."

"I was wrong."

"The fuck do you mean you were wrong?" Dream snarls. "George, he *hits* you. There's no debate there."

"He only hits me when I do something wrong. When I'm doing bad things that hurt him."

"George, I spent the last two days thinking you were *dead*, okay? I don't give a fuck what you think you did. You didn't fucking deserve that."

"Yes, I did!" George snaps. "I was gonna leave him! Do you have any fucking idea how much damage I could have caused? To both him and myself?"

"No more damage than he caused to your face!" Dream knows it's dumb and immature the instant the words leave his mouth.

George laughs, bitterly. "Well, that's what it all comes down to, right?"

"What are you talking about?"

"That's why you like me, isn't it? Because I'm pretty. Just a pretty face for you to wank to late at night. If you really saw me, if you had to live with me every day like he does, you'd get bored of me. John may have a temper, but he loves me, no matter what."

"*That is not love!* I don't know how many more times I can tell you, George. You don't hit someone you love! Ever! I would rather fucking die than hurt you and that's what love should be. I don't know where you got the idea that I would stop loving you if I 'really saw you' but it's bullshit, okay? It's absolute fucking bullshit. I've been stupidly, pathetically, pitifully in love with you for almost seven years now and I plan on loving you for the rest of my life, so—"

"You don't know that!" George interrupts, tears streaming down his face.

"Yes, I do! Goddamit, George, I love you! I love you, I love you, I love you! How many times do I have to say it to get it through that thick fucking skull of yours? I love you! With my entire heart, with my entire *life*, I love you. And I don't care if you don't feel the same way. And if you need platonic love instead of romantic, then I'll give you that, too. I'll give you anything you need and anything you want because *that* is what love is."

"What I want," George breathes, sounding terrified of the power that phrase holds. He pauses, tries again. "What I want is for you to leave."

Dream crosses his arms, standing firm. "Anything but that."

"Dream, just..." George sighs, wincing in pain as he absent-mindedly rubs his tired eyes. "Just go, okay? John will get home any minute now, and you can't be here when he does."

"I'm not fucking leaving you with that sadistic bastard, okay?"

"Yes, you are," George says, grabbing Dream's wrist and dragging him toward the door.

"No, I'm not," Dream snaps, ripping his wrist from George's grasp.

George stares Dream down, looking so drunk on resentment that Dream almost doesn't recognise him. "Do you know what he'll do to me if he finds you here?"

"I won't let him hurt you."

"Do you really wanna bet on that?"

Dream presses his lips together firmly.

George sighs, running a hand through his hair. Dream tries not to think about how much duller it looks. "John has work tomorrow from nine to five. Come around ten and we can talk, okay?"

George has to make his own decision to reach out for help. You can't fix this for him.

Dream clenches his jaw. "Fine. I'll be back at ten."

George opens the door and peers out, nervously. "Okay, bye," he rushes.

Dream presses his hand firmly against the door, preventing George from closing it in his face. "I love you," he says pointedly.

George worries his lip, chewing on unspoken promises, and says, "I'll see you tomorrow."

Dream reluctantly takes his hand from the door and George closes it softly, locking Dream out, as has become his favourite habit.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, we're soooo close to the big scene you've all been waiting for, but I'm honestly a little nervous. I've seen what a lot of you guys and hoping for and it's not exactly what I have planned, but I'm hopeful that you guys will like this, too.

Also, sorry if the Dream leaving George bit seems OOC. Honestly, I needed a plot point for the next chapter to happen the way I wanted it to. But I promise it'll be really worth it :))

Comments give me happy chemicals <3333

P.S. I finally fixed the chapter titles for this because they were super messy, so sorry if that sent off any false update emails this morning.

I'm losing face

Chapter Summary

Dream comes to visit at an inopportune time.

Chapter Notes

IT'S HERE. THE MOMENT YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR. IT'S FINALLY ARRIVED.

tw: cheating, (inaccurate) slut-shaming, emotional/verbal abuse, effects of physical abuse (blood, bruises), physical abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

John is running almost an hour late to work the next day—he and George had a very long morning—when he bumps into one of their neighbours. They hooked up ages ago at some party and now he follows John around like a puppy dog whenever he gets the chance.

"Hey, John," he giggles.

"Hey," John grumbles, trying to get around him. "I'm actually running late so I can't talk right now."

"Yeah, no, same here," he hums, stepping in front of him again. "But first, I just have to say that I'm very disappointed in you."

John's sure this is supposed to be flirting, but he really is running late. That's the thing about these younger flings: they always think they're a priority. "What?"

The boy smacks his arm playfully. "You know I have a thing for Americans!"

"What are you talking about?"

"That guy you had over last night."

John's blood runs cold. He shoves past the boy, ignoring the indignant squeal he lets out. He pulls his keys from his pocket, shoving them in the lock so harshly he's surprised they didn't snap.

He slams the door behind him and calls out, "Still not enough for you, huh?"

George walks out of the bedroom, hair still wet from their shower, one of John's t-shirts clinging to his damp skin. "What?"

John storms over to him, relishing in the way George trips over himself as he backs up against the wall. "Ran into one of our neighbours on the way out. He said someone was over here yesterday while I was at the supermarket."

George swallows harshly, expression forcibly calm. "I've no idea what you're talking about. They must've been thinking of someone else. I think Lisa might've had somebody over around—"

"Don't," John snaps, so close to George's face now that he must smell the coffee on his breath. "Don't fucking patronise me."

George presses himself flat against the wall, palms splayed against the cool paint. "I told him to leave," he rasps. "I told him I didn't want to see him."

"Oh, yeah," John scoffs. "I'm sure you did."

"John, please. This wasn't my fault. I didn't tell him to come here."

"No, of course not. You just spread your whore legs for him when he did."

"I didn't—"

"Shut. Up," John snaps, wrapping one hand around George's throat. "All you ever do is lie."

John shoves George harder into the wall as the rage courses through him. It's the gnawing, aching beast in the pit of his stomach that he doesn't care enough to tame. Somewhere, in the back of his mind, maybe he knows this is wrong. But the John who plays in the ocean and cooks spaghetti with his boyfriend is long gone.

George's eyes glaze over, the pound of a fist against his jaw the first click of the metronome.

This game is fucking exhausting.

- - -

Dream didn't sleep at all last night. All he could think about were the bruises on George's face and the way they could multiply overnight. And about how he was close enough to stop it. He was close enough to reach out and pull George in and away from that Hell. And he would. No matter the cost, if it stole his last breath, he would. If only George would let him.

Dream leave his hotel at 9:15. It's a ten minute walk to George's place, but he can't wait any longer. He paces the parking lot for a while, some part of him hoping to see John. He doesn't know what he would do, but it would probably be illegal.

9:55

He can't wait any longer.

He jogs up the stairs. The elevator would probably be faster but he's too nervous to stand still and wait for it.

He gets to George's door and hesitates. What if John's still there?

He leans closer, listening for voices. All he hears is a long, deep groan.

Dream has never before hoped that George is getting laid.

He stands there, unsure of what to do. It's perfectly likely that they're just having a good time. But, given what Dream knows, it's just as likely that they're not.

Fuck it.

Knock. Knock. Knock.

A cold laugh sounds on the other side of door.

“Is that him?”

That’s not a good time sort of voice. Something’s wrong.

The heartache multiplies tenfold as he processes the words. *Is that him?*

There’s only one person that John could be so pissed about seeing.

This fight—whatever John is doing to George right now—it’s Dream’s fault.

- - -

George shudders at the knock on the door. He barely remembers where he is, so deep in his own head. He hadn’t even considered the fact that Dream was coming over.

John, though? John just laughs. “Is that him?”

George stares up at him, tries to speak. He can’t think of the words. He can’t think of a single goddamn thing.

John leans in closer, breath warm against George’s ear. “See what you’ve done?” he demands. “Do you see all of the pain you’ve caused? All of the hurt? He wants to take you away from me, you know. “

“I’m sorry,” he mumbles absently.

John straightens up, towering over him. “Tell him to go away.”

And George means to. He really does.

But instead, he shakes his head. He can’t even form the word “no” anymore, the letters themselves beaten out of him but this small act of resistance lies so deep within his bones that he can’t suppress it. He’s so tired of this. He’s so tired of everything. He just wants to go home, but his home is the place stained with his blood. He doesn’t know where else to go, but he knows, he just *knows* that he can’t stay here.

“I said,” John growls, “tell him to go away.”

George shakes his head again, gaining confidence with each desperate knock.

“Dream.” Just one broken word flying out from his throat, breaking through his larynx, a frightened bird falling from its perch, flapping desperately to steady itself before it’s flattened against the pavement. And it does. It steadies itself, not an inch off the ground. And it soars.

“Open the fucking door!” Dream shouts, pounding at it hysterically. “John, I swear to god, I will end your fucking life if you don’t open this goddamn door right the fuck now!”

John’s getting desperate now—George can see it in his face. “Tell him to go away, George, or you’re not going to like what happens.”

George wishes he had something cool to say, something witty like he’d hear in a movie, but he doesn’t. He just sits there, pressed up against the wall, staring into the wild eyes of the man he

loves, wondering how they ended up here.

John lands one last pathetic punch.

The door falls inward.

- - -

Dream slams his entire body against the door with a hysteria he's never felt before. This entire situation feels eerily similar to that day on the phone, the feeling of helplessness like monoxide.

Dream body chucks the door again, arm bruising from the force, but he doesn't even notice. He's desperate to breathe again.

One last shove and the door is collapsing inward, Dream stumbling into the apartment just in time to watch John's fist meet George's face. He moves before he can even think.

Dream shoves him away from George, standing protectively between the two as George's knees give out and he falls pathetically to the floor.

Dream shoves John again, relishing wickedly in the look of fear playing at John's face. He's smaller than Dream thought he'd be. It's not even close to being a fair fight.

"So, you're Dream, then?" John snarls, seemingly desperate to regain some sense of control here. "I've heard a lot about you."

"Likewise. All terrible things."

"You really think breaking into his apartment and beating the shit out of his boyfriend is the best way to get in his pants?"

"I think you should shut the fuck up," Dream warns, stalking closer.

"He's never gonna love you, ya know." John's just taunting him now, playing his last hand, broke and losing. "Even if you have him, the little damsel in distress, he'll never really love you. I bet he'll let you fuck him, though. His standards aren't exactly high. But even when you fuck him, he'll always be thinking of me."

Dream grabs him by the collar, slamming him into the wall. "You wanna say that again, asshole?"

John laughs, hysterical almost. "I said," he snarls, "even when you fuck him, he'll *always* be thinking of me."

Dream reels back, his fist a blink away from John's stupid fucking face. Dream has never wanted something so badly as he wants to cause pain in this moment. He relishes in the fear on his face, finds some sick sense of justice in it.

A whimpering, pleading sort of noise interrupts them, breaking through the rush of blood in Dream's ears, a gasp of breath from the river of ire he's drowning in.

He looks over at George to see him looking right back with wide, tearful eyes, looking just as terrified as he had when John had had him pinned to the wall.

He's scared of me.

Dream looks at John, and then back at George, comparing John's pale and unmarred skin to the

dark bruises and the blood that decorates George's face. John looks so... okay. He has no right to look like that after everything he's done. He deserves to be in pain.

Dream looks back at John, fist poised and itching, the most primal part of his being begging him to *hurt, kill, protect*. He wants to bring him pain. He wants to leave John as bloody and bruised as John left George, but he can't.

Because George still looks scared. He's scared of John and he's scared of being without John, and he's scared of Dream, too, now. He hasn't felt safe in so long and if he watches Dream put John in his place, he'll see it every time he closes his eyes. He'll see the one person he thought he could trust losing his mind and lashing out in violence. He'll see blood on Dream's hands and a smile on his face and he'll never be able to move past that.

Dream drops John's collar, relishing in the way he falls to the ground just as limply as George had. He spits in his face. "You're not fucking worth it."

Dream walks slowly toward George, like he's approaching a wild animal caught in a trap. He keeps an eye on John, but he stays right where Dream dropped him, collapsed against the wall, heaving for breath, trembling pathetically.

Dream crouches down in front of George, a gentle, grounding hand on his forearm. George meets his gaze at the contact, eyes twitching frantically, lips trembling around unspoken words.

"We're leaving now," Dream whispers, forcing a smile onto his face.

George nods slowly.

"Can you walk?"

George places his hands hesitantly on either side of him, trying to push himself up off the ground. Dream reaches a hand out to help, but the instant George starts to stand, his knees give out on him, trembling from the adrenaline. He falls back to the ground.

"That's okay," Dream hums. "Okay, well, we have to get you out of here. Is it okay if I carry you?"

George nods again.

"Okay, Gogy, I'm gonna pick you up now." Dream narrates everything so that George knows exactly what's going on, even if he's having trouble processing the words.

Dream scoops George up bridal style, encouraging him to wrap his arms around Dream's neck for stability. George leans his head against Dream's shoulder, casting one last forlorn glance at his now-ex lover. He looks surprised. The ghost of a smile plays at George's face.

Fin.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so this is what I was referencing in my last author's note. I know a lot of you guys were looking forward to seeing Dream beat the shit out of John and, honestly, there's a self-indulgent part of me that wanted that, too. But in reality, I couldn't get

past the excess pain and trauma that would have caused George.

Being in a toxic situation myself, I know that if somebody ever beat up my "John," that would only cause me more pain. As terrible as he may look to an outsider, George still loves him and doesn't want to see him hurt. And, even more than that, if Dream had beat up John, he would have given George a violent impression and deprived him of the one person who still made him feel safe.

I hope this wasn't disappointing to you guys, but it was important to me that it was written this way.

Please make sure you drink some water if you need to and eat something if you're hungry. Much love <33

secondly, I know I haven't written much

Chapter Summary

George wakes up in an unfamiliar place.

Chapter Notes

tw: hospital, blood, weight issues, disordered eating behaviours

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Blood. Blood in his mouth, blood in his eyes. Pain everywhere, excruciating, worse than anything he's felt before. Lying on the ice-cold concrete, alone, and bleeding out, he feels caught somewhere between peace and fury. Everything is drawing to a close, and maybe if he weren't so exhausted, he would be angry about it.

George.

He opens his eyes, looking up into the sky for the source of the voice. He thinks that maybe god has finally come to claim him.

You're having a nightmare.

And if that isn't exactly what this past year has been.

George. Wake up.

George opens his eyes again and, this time, the light is almost blinding. He shuts his eyes again and groans as a more dull, aching sort of pain courses through his body.

"Hey, buddy, sorry I had to wake you. You were thrashing around pretty bad. I was afraid you were gonna pull your wires out. The nurse should be here in a bit to check you out, okay?"

"Mmhm," George hums, rolling over to go back to sleep. It takes him a minute for his half-conscious brain to process the words.

Wide-eyed, he looks over to see Dream sitting at his bedside in a small cushioned chair. It's almost laughable the way he dwarfs it, knees at an acute angle, elbows digging into his thighs. But any humour that could possibly be derived from the situation is crushed when he sees the state that Dream is in.

His eyes are bloodshot, jaw clenched tight, hands clasped together before parted lips. His hair is tangled, like he's been running his hands through it. His fingernails are bitten down to the quick.

He looks like shit. But he's smiling.

The past day comes flooding back to him, a torrential downpour of fear, of doubt. He'd left John.

He'd left the one person he could truly count on to love him, day in and day out. He'd left for some romantic notion of what is and is not *deserved*. He wants to go back.

But at the same time, waking up with Dream's hand in his, warm and calloused, George thinks, for the first time since the day of his failed escape, that maybe, just maybe, this is something he can have. A friend, someone who loves him. Maybe he can trust that Dream will keep loving him.

"Hey," Dream whispers, squeezing his hand a little tighter.

George allows himself a fragile smile, pushing the panicked sobs further down his throat. "Hi."

- - -

Dream's surprised he has any hair left to pull out after spending the past twenty-four hours in this desolate hospital room. He had expected him to get checked out by a nurse, maybe get his nose splinted, be given some meds for the pain, and be discharged, no problem. He hadn't understood how deep the damage ran.

The main problem is the malnutrition. According to George's doctor, he's severely underweight, with deficiencies in just about every nutritional category. She suspects an eating disorder, which puts George at a higher risk of refusing treatment once he's conscious enough to give or withhold consent.

She says that he has old fractures on his ribs that he apparently never sought medical attention for. They healed alright on their own, though, and shouldn't give him any problems in the future. She also says that his nose is already partially healed so there isn't much that she can do about it.

She prescribes an anti-inflammatory, but she's hesitant to prescribe any pain meds. She says that he's at a higher risk of substance abuse or addiction because of the trauma he's incurred.

So, basically, everything is fucked and there isn't shit that Dream can do about it. As always.

Dream's really starting to feel like every time he tries to help, he just proves himself to be more and more useless.

But he's there. If nothing else, he's there. He holds George's hand and he brushes the hair from his forehead and he's *there*. When George's rhythmic breathing devolves into shaky, panicked gasps, Dream is there to wake him from his nightmare. It takes a minute for George to realise that he's not in his home, panic clear in his eyes when he looks over to see Dream sitting in the chair at his bedside.

An untameable look of relief makes its way onto Dream's face. "Hey."

"Hi," George rasps, small smile etched onto his face. "Where are we?"

"St. George's Hospital."

George inspects his fingers, like he's surprised to see them still attached. "Why?"

"You were hurt."

"I was fine."

"Yeah, well," Dream says, taking another swig of his Monster. "The doctor disagrees."

"It was a beating. I've taken dozens just like it."

“That doesn’t make it okay.”

“Whatever,” George huffs.

Now comes the tricky part. “And that’s not why you’re still here, either.”

“What do you mean?”

“The main thing that the doctor is worried about...” Dream drifts off nervously. He clears his throat and starts again. “George, she says you’re underweight. Like, really underweight.”

George just laughs. “Okay? And?”

“George, you’re not healthy. You’re severely malnourished. That’s why the tube is in your nose. To give you food.”

All the blood drains from George’s face. “The tube is...”

Dream has spent countless hours online looking up the right words and phrases to avoid triggering George. They’re etched into his skull by now. “Giving you nutrition. Giving you what you need.”

“I don’t need a fucking feeding tube, Dream. I’m fine. So, I’m a little on the skinny side. I always have been. You know that.”

“So, you’re telling me you don’t have an eating disorder?”

“I do not have an eating disorder,” George affirms, so deadset in his tone that, at the very least, he must believe himself. “Sometimes I skip meals or whatever because John wants to make sure I don’t gain weight,” Dream purposefully ignores the way he speaks in the present tense, “but it’s not, like, a regular thing. I’m not throwing up or counting calories or anything like that. I’m not sick.”

Dream takes a breath, tries to remember all of the right things to say to bring George out of the pit he’s dug himself. “Then, let us get you better.”

“Why? If it’s not a problem, then why do you need to fix it?”

“Because it *is* a problem,” Dream sighs. “Even if it really wasn’t on purpose, it’s still unhealthy. The doctor said you’re at higher risk of fainting, of an arrhythmia. She says you could die from this George.”

George looks away as tears well up in his eyes. “How much?” he whispers.

“What?”

“How much weight do they want me to gain?”

“I don’t know,” Dream sighs. “I don’t think there’s a number, really. They just want you to be healthy.”

George trails a shaky hand along the tube. He follows it until it disappears into his nose, but his hand keeps moving upward. He brushes his fingertips over the bump in his nose. “It’s broken,” he mumbles absently.

“Yeah.”

“No more Pretty Privilege George, I guess.”

The way he says it... Dream wants to kiss away his tears, to worship his body until he knows with every fibre of his being that he's the most beautiful man on the face of this Earth. But he knows that would be selfish. So, instead, he takes George's hand from his face, holding it in his own warmer, more calloused one.

“Always Pretty Privilege George,” he whispers, smiling against his knuckles.

George turns, meeting Dream's eye, taking in the unwavering love in his gaze. “Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you guys all so, so, so much for all of the support on the last chapter. You guys are genuinely the kindest, most supportive audience I could ever ask for. It's been such an intense ride, so thank you guys for sticking with me through it. I love and appreciate each and every one of y'all. <33

Also, I honestly should have put this in last chapter's notes but I'm dumb and didn't think of it (/lh). The “fin” in the last chapter, as I'm sure you've all realised by now, is NOT the end of the story. It was meant to denote the end of a chapter in George's life, one full of violence and fear, and the opening of a new one, this time full of love and healing. That sounds sorta pretentious now that I say it out loud but I thought it was cute sooooo

Also also, I'm sure none of you even remember this, but I'm gonna mention it anyways, just in case. I completely forgot that I'd written Cat and Dog into this fic and I really didn't feel like figuring out how George would go back and get them without having to deal with John, so I waved my Magic Author Wand™ and they went *poof*. Sorry Cat and Dog. Might write them in later for that fluffy pet adoption content, though, if y'all want.

Also also also, this was originally about twice as long, but I broke it up because I don't like long chapters and also I like torturing you guys. But anyways, that means that the next chapter is entirely written and edited, so it should be up shortly.

Comment give me happy chemicals <333

I've lost a piece of me in you

Chapter Summary

Dream and George discuss their plans for the future.

Chapter Notes

tw: hospitals, weight issues, body dysmorphia

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's a painful few days, both mentally and physically. The doctor makes George eat a lot and, consequently, he gains a bit of weight (it's barely noticeable to Dream, but George feels like he's doubled in size). But more than that, it's a weird few days. It's weird to run out of things to talk about with the person you used to talk to about everything. It's weird getting to know the man you already love.

But, no matter how tense the air gets, Dream doesn't leave. Not even once. He refuses to leave for anything other than bathroom breaks and to-go meals from the cafeteria. He holds George's hand while he eats. Tells him stories, tells him jokes. It seems to help when Dream eats with him, so he does. Dream thinks he probably gained more weight during that time in the hospital than George did, but he doesn't care. He'd do anything just to make George feel safe and happy. Besides, it's not like he's looking to catch anyone's eye these days anyway.

Late at night, with George tucked into the hospital bed and Dream sat back in the rock-hard visitor's chair, Dream wages the question.

"So, what are you gonna do after we bust you out of here?"

George turns toward Dream, careful not to pull any of the wires off of his chest. "I dunno. Probably go stay with my parents for a while. Just until I get on my feet again."

Dream nods. George's parents came to visit on George's second day in the hospital. They seemed nice enough, but a little distant. Almost disinterested. Dream doesn't like the idea of George staying there, worries that they won't pay him enough attention. It's a dumb thing to worry about, maybe—they are his parents after all; they've been taking care of him for most of his life—but he worries nonetheless.

"I like it here," Dream muses. "I wouldn't mind living here."

George just gives him a look, almost reminiscent of the sassy, mocking persona he used to put on.

Dream presses on. "I'm serious. I like it here. Why not move?"

George huffs a laugh, rolling back to stare at the ceiling.

"Come on, Georgie. You know you'd miss me if I left."

"Stop it," George mumbles.

"Yeah, you'd miss me," Dream drawls, poking him gently in his side.

"Dream, I don't—"

"I bet Patches would like it here, too. She never liked the heat, anyways—"

"Dream, just stop it, alright?" George snaps, bloodshot eyes locking back onto Dream's. "Just stop it."

Quietly, almost submissively, Dream asks, "Did I do something wrong?"

"No. You didn't do anything wrong. I just... I hate it when you do that."

"Do what?"

"*That!* When you look at me like that and you talk to me like that."

"Like what?"

"Like you love me!" George shouts. And then softer, like he's just waiting for the rug to be ripped out from underneath him, "Like I'm worthy of being loved by you."

"George, you are—"

"Don't. Please just... Don't. Don't say that I'm worthy of being loved when I know for a fact that all I cause you is pain. I mean, god, Dream, just look at yourself. You're a fucking mess. You look like hell, you smell like hell. You've lost your fucking grip. And that's my fault."

Dream feels his heart sink in his chest. He fumbles blindly for something to say, but the sentiment of it all overwhelms him.

When Dream can't find the words, George just scoffs and turns away. "I'm tired."

Dream stays silent for a while, runs a hand over his face, almost surprised to feel that his light stubble has grown into a full beard. He hasn't looked in the mirror in days, hasn't shaved in nearly a week. He can't even remember the last time he showered. He feels so detached from himself, like George is the only thing in the world that matters.

He waits for George to fall asleep. Once his breathing evens out, Dream stands, fumbling for a pen in the dark, and writes a note by the light of his phone.

Hey Gogy,

Thought about what you said. You were right. I have to go run some errands. Be back by noon.

*I (still) love you,
- D*

And then, for the first time in days, he leaves. It's weird, walking out into the cold, humid night air. He breathes it in, feels it settle into his lungs.

He goes back to his hotel room and flops down on the bed. He hasn't slept more than a couple of hours at a time since he got here. He feels exhausted down to his very bones.

He lets himself rest.

- - -

When Dream wakes up in the morning, he still feels exhausted, like his body's still catching up on the thirty-some hours of sleep he's missed this week. But, even still, he feels lighter. Like a little part of him is more alive today than it was before.

He showers, letting the heat seep into his bones, and changes into fresh clothes. He brushes his teeth. He shaves. He even dabs on a little of that cheap hotel cologne. He feels almost like a person again.

On the way back to the hospital, he swings by a cafe to get some eggs and toast that don't taste like they came out of a shoelace factory.

He's back to the hospital by 11:15.

- - -

George is lying on his side, facing away from the door, the same as he was when Dream snuck out late last night. He hears Dream take his usual seat by the side of his bed.

"You came back."

George hears Dream startle behind him, clearly having assumed that George was asleep again.

"I said I would."

It's quiet a moment.

"I'm sorry for yelling at you," George says, fighting to hold his voice steady.

"I understand."

"It won't happen again."

"It probably will," Dream reasons. "People get mad. They yell. It's not the end of the world."

"I made you leave."

"Yeah. You did. But not for the reasons you think." A cautious hand meets George's shoulder.

"Will you please look at me, Georgie?"

George stiffens under the touch but turns around anyway.

It's a strange sight. Somewhere between sickness and comfort. "You shaved," he muses, but he knows it's so much more than that.

"And showered. You were right about me stinking," Dream jokes. Softer, he adds, "You were right about a lot, actually."

George's eyes well up with tears. *This is it. This is the moment he realises you were never worth the trouble you cause.*

"You know, George, I started going to therapy a few weeks ago. Sapnap made me because I kept complaining to him about how much of a simp I was and it was getting on his nerves. I didn't like

the idea at first. I thought that my only problem was the fact that you weren't happy. If you were happy, then I would be happy, too. And that's true to an extent; when I see you smile, my entire world lights up. But that's not all of it.

"I was so worried about you that I lost myself in the frenzy. And even now, I've been so busy taking care of you that I haven't been taking care of myself. I thought I was doing the right thing, but I realise now that I made you feel like a burden. You're not a burden. I'm just bad at managing things sometimes. But I'm trying, Gogs. I'm really trying here. I want you to be happy, and I want to be happy with you. I want us both to be happy."

That wasn't what George was expecting. It sparks an ache in his chest unlike the abandonment would have, but perilous in its own right. "You're looking at me again," George mumbles, turning his face toward the opposite wall to hide the smile fighting its way onto his face.

A warm, calloused hand slides along George's jaw, guiding his gaze back toward Dream. His stare is almost haunting in its intensity. "I like to look at you."

They stay like that for a long time, piercing eyes locked together, and George thinks he'll grow to like the way Dream looks at him. There's something about it. Like the come-down from a bad high. It's nauseating, but the calm washing over your frayed nerves feels almost holy. It takes your breath away and gives it back, stronger, cleaner than before.

"I'd like you to move in with me," Dream says finally, breaking the long stretch of reverent silence.

George allows the quirk of his lips to ascend into a smile. "I think I'd like that, too."

Chapter End Notes

I'm incredibly tired and stressed and just generally not vibing with life rn, so I apologise if this chapter is kind of a filler. Next chapter, y'all get a short time jump, Gogy moving in, and a spoonful of karlnap content, so hopefully that makes up for it.

Speaking of karlnap, y'all know how I write karlnap fluffshots as practice? So, I wrote one the other day called, "Picking Up the Pieces" and it's just a short hurt/comfort but I thought y'all might enjoy (tw for non-graphic discussions of s*xual a*sault tho)

Ramadan Kareem to those who celebrate!! Much love <33

and ruin everything

Chapter Summary

George adjusts to life with Dream. Karl and Sapnap check up on their friends.

Chapter Notes

tw: alcohol as a coping mechanism

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After eight days in the hospital, George is finally discharged and cleared to fly back to America with Dream. They're sure they must look funny with only a carry-on between them, but George didn't want to go back for anything. Dream already ordered him a new gaming set-up anyway and he promised they could go to the mall soon for clothes and such. In the meantime, George drowns in Dream's hoodies and sweatpants while Dream tries to remember how to breathe.

George falls asleep on the flight, but Dream can't quiet his thoughts enough. The last flight had been so packed full of adrenaline that he hadn't had the mind to be anxious. Now, with George by his side, weak and exhausted, Dream feels the anxiety roaring back to life, stronger than ever.

George leans against the window, curled into himself, a purposeful position to prevent himself from leaning on Dream in his sleep. His face is pressed against the cold glass. That's why Dream doesn't see at first. It's not until his trembling exceeds the general turbulence of the flight that Dream realises he's having another nightmare.

"George," he whispers, placing a gentle hand on his forearm. "Wake up."

George stirs slightly, his head lolling toward Dream, so he can see his blanched, sweat-drenched face. Even in sleep, he looks exhausted. Dream feels terrible waking him when he so clearly needs to rest, but he knows the longer he lets the nightmare go on, the harder it'll be to talk George down when he wakes up.

Dream leans awkwardly across the armrest, brushing the hair from George's sweat-stained forehead. He presses one steady hand to George's cheek, guiding him to face the blonde. George's eyes squeeze tighter shut before flying open.

His breathing is laboured and heavy, his eyes bloodshot and twitchy. He takes a minute to adjust to his surroundings before realising that he's safe now. Just another nightmare. "Sorry," he mumbles, turning away from Dream.

"What? What are you sorry for?"

George just shrugs and presses the Call Attendant button. When the flight attendant makes his way over, George orders two nips of brandy.

"Are you sure that's a good idea, George?" Dream asks, nervously. "I mean, you literally just got out of the hospital."

"I was in there for malnourishment, not alcoholism, Dream."

"I know, but—"

"I'm not your pet project," George snaps. "I can handle myself."

Dream backs down, sinking submissively into his seat. "I know," he mutters, pulling out his phone and scrolling aimlessly through Twitter. He pretends to be involved in a news story, but he's still watching George out of the corner of his eye and cringing as he downs each bottle in one gulp before curling back into himself, face pressed once more against the cool glass.

Dream clears his throat nervously, combing through the things he could say, things he wants to and things he needs to. "George?"

"Yeah."

"I really hate flying."

George softens infinitesimally. "I know."

"I'm kind of nervous," Dream continues hesitantly. "Is it alright if I hug you?"

George looks over at Dream like he knows his game, but then his face softens and he pulls himself upright before leaning in the opposite direction, toward Dream. Dream wraps one strong arm around his shoulders, pulling George in closer. He whines as the armrest digs into his ribs and Dream laughs, pulling away for a second to tug off his own hoodie, folding it over the armrest and pulling George close again. It's cold in the plane, but warmth blooms inside Dream's stomach when George falls asleep on his chest.

- - -

There's an adjustment period when George first comes to stay with Dream. George stays in his room most days, curled up under blankets, pretending to be asleep, and Dream hovers in the living room or in the kitchen, just waiting for George to come out, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, like the past year was some nightmare he's just woken up from. Like everything is okay now.

Dream keeps track of George's meals, following the doctor's recommendations. He drops the meals off in George's room and comes back a few hours later to find half the plate untouched.

He tries not to worry. He worries anyway.

But it gets better. It takes a few weeks, but George starts leaving his room in the morning, eating meals with Dream in the kitchen. Dream helps him set up his new PC so they can play Minecraft together.

They both know they should stream, but where could they even start? How could they even begin to explain the course of the past year—or, hell, even the past month—without breaking down entirely?

So, they do what they've grown so good at doing lately: They ignore it. They pretend like everything is fine, they pretend like their lives haven't been uprooted, and they pretend like they can live forever in this stupid, little paradise they've made in Dream's Florida home.

Sometimes, they even believe themselves.

- - -

“So, how’s he been?” Sap asks one night, over the phone.

“He’s been good. He’s been really good. I think he’s really adjusting to life here in the States.”

“That’s good to hear. Ya know, Karl and I, we’ve been really missing you two.”

“Yeah. We miss you, too, morons.”

“We’ve been thinking—if you guys are up for it—maybe it would be about time for a proper $\frac{4}{5}$ Feral Boys meetup?”

“Oh, uh...” Dream drifts off. “I dunno, man. Shit’s been kind of hectic here lately and George is still getting used to everything and maybe you could just come, like, next month when everything’s calmed down—”

“Dude, we’re literally your best friends. Aren’t we, like, the best people to come over right now? I mean, George needs to know he has people in his corner, right?”

“No—I mean, yes—but—”

“Come on, man, Karl’s been talking my ear off about visiting for weeks now and he’s starting to get on my nerves. Can you at least ask George?”

Dream hesitates, weighs his options. He really does miss Sap. And maybe it would be good for George to feel like he has more people by his side. Not to mention, Sap and Karl have been together for well over a year now and Dream’s still yet to meet Karl in person. (He always wanted George to be the first person he met, aside from Sappap. Over-emotional, maybe, but it just wouldn’t have felt right.)

"Fine," Dream huffs. "I'll ask him tonight."

Sap squeals. “Awesome! We really do miss you guys.”

“Yeah, yeah. We miss you, too, idiot.”

“I’m gonna cuddle the shit out of both of you when I get there.”

Dream scoffs. “Sure thing, Mr. Had-A-Crush-On-Karl-For-Two-Years-Before-Asking-Him-Out-And-Still-Couldn’t-Kiss-Him.”

“Oh my god,” Sap groans. “You’re actually such a dick. I changed my mind. I don’t wanna come anymore.”

Dream crosses his arms petulantly over his chest. “Good.”

“Good.”

“Fine.”

“Fine.”

“How soon would you guys not be coming?” Dream asks.

“We could be not coming by like... next Tuesday? I don’t think either of us have anything scheduled for, like, a week after that.”

“Alright, well, I’ll ask George.”

“Tell him we love him.”

“Alright.”

“Tell him we think he’s sexy.”

“Absolutely not,” Dream laughs, hanging up the phone.

- - -

“So,” Dream starts over dinner, “Sap called today. He and Karl have been thinking about coming down for a visit lately.”

George nods absently. “Cool.”

“Well, I told them I’d have to check with you and stuff. There’s a lot going on lately and I just wanted to make sure that it wouldn’t be too much for you, or that—”

“Dream. I said that sounds cool.”

“Really? Okay, yeah, cool. And if anything comes up and you start to feel at all overwhelmed or anxious, then just let me know and I can—”

“Dream,” George snaps. “Stop it. I am not a child and I am not a porcelain doll, okay? I’m not going to break if you hold me wrong.”

Dream sinks into his chair, feeling like a child being scolded. “Yeah. No, of course. I’m sorry.”

There’s a long pause, atmosphere growing heavy with the weight of unspoken lies. George sighs. “I’m really tired. I think I’m gonna go to bed now.”

“Okay.”

George washes his dish and then hovers in the hallway like he’s waiting for something. When whatever it is doesn’t seem to come, George turns on his heel and goes to bed.

Chapter End Notes

Hi, y'all!! I'm back from my short break and I just wanted to say thank you all for being so understanding. I was having a really stressful week (SATs, school play, academic decathlon nationals, end of the school quarter, starting college apps, the list goes on), so reading all of your kind and supportive comments really did mean the absolute world to me. I'm doing a lot better now, so I should be back to some semblance of an update schedule.

Second order of business: I updated the tags to fit the rest of this story. There are very few changes, with the main one being the addition of a "Choose Your Own Rating

Tag." This story was always rated E for violence, but I do plan to add in two NSFW scenes in the future. They will not be smut scenes (I don't write smut in general and certainly not for RPF), but they will be sexual in nature. They will be written in a manner similar to many of the abusive scenes, which is to say that they will focus more on the characters' thoughts and emotions about physical intimacy than on the sex itself. They are plot-related and play a major role in George's recovery in my opinion, but I will also do my best to make them skippable for those of you that would not be comfortable reading them.

Lastly, apologies for another set-up chapter. I know they're not the most exciting but I just need to set the scene and the tone for the comfort portion of this fic. Either next chapter or the chapter after (it depends on how long the next chapter ends up being), Karl and Sapnap will come to visit, which is when the recovery/comfort arc really kicks up, so please just bare with me until then :)))

Oh, also, just a quick note so there's no confusion: George is lashing out at Dream because he's confused and hurting. Dream is trying his best here and does not deserve George's impatient treatment. This will be addressed in future chapters.

so it's all gonna be about me

Chapter Summary

Dream asks for guidance, but struggles to accept the advice he's given. George has a heart-to-heart with his fanbase.

Chapter Notes

tw: mentions of suicide attempt

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Another Thursday, another over-air conditioned afternoon spent on the edge of a battered couch, recounting the week's events. Or, in this case, the past two weeks.

"Sorry again about last week. I know how rude it is to just not show up to an appointment."

"It's alright. From your email, it sounds like you've had a lot on your plate."

"Yeah," Dream huffs. "You could certainly say that."

"So, tell me about it."

And Dream does. He unloads all of the pain and trauma of the past two weeks onto this woman while she listens, engaged, interested in his story, only jumping in occasionally for clarification. By the end of his rant, he's sputtering, panting, the words falling out of his mouth, frantic and untameable as the ocean that used to separate Dream from his counterpart.

When his story draws to a close and he slumps back against the tattered couch cushions, Maria allows the silence to simmer for a moment, some aching sort of catharsis in the exposure, the echo of soft-spoken sins through a confessional.

Finally, she clears her throat and speaks. "That's a lot to unpack there."

"Yeah," he huffs.

"Well, let's start at the present, I guess. He's living with you now. How's that been for you?"

"Good. It's been good. He's been doing really well, making a lot of progress, ya know. Eating his meals, showering, picking up some of the hobbies he used to have—"

"And that's all great, but that's not what I asked. How has it been for *you*?"

Dream pauses, mouth still hanging open, half-molded against the words. He hates this. That feeling, like remembering you forgot something at home, but you're already halfway to the airport. That feeling of knowing you forgot something and not knowing if there's time to go back for it.

"I've been good." Dream cringes at his own voice, the high-pitched lie he's been telling himself over and over since he first set foot back in the Orlando airport. "It's been a lot, ya know, but I've been good. I got what I wanted, right?"

"You got George, yes. He's safe and relatively healthy and I know that was your primary concern. But you wanted him happy, too. You wanted him to be happy with you, to appreciate you. And, on some level, you wanted him as something more than just a friend."

"I don't care about that," Dream answers instinctively. "I just want him to feel safe. He's so hurt right now, I wouldn't even dream of taking advantage of him like that."

"You're right. He isn't in a good headspace to jump into another relationship right now. But you're still allowed to be disappointed by that."

"I'm not. I genuinely don't care about that. All I want is for him to be happy, whether that's with me or with someone else or with no one at all."

"You're a very thoughtful person, Clay."

"Yeah, well, he's pretty much all I think about so." He pauses, then cuts in again, "I mean, I think about myself, too. I was just exaggerating. I've been taking care of myself, too, I promise."

"I'm proud of you for that. You've been under a lot of pressure lately. It can be hard to keep up with self-care in these types of circumstances."

"Well, I kind of have to after that whole thing with George."

"So you're taking care of yourself for George?"

Dream feels like he's walking into a trap, but he shrugs anyway. "I guess so."

Maria purses her lips, and hums, "Well, I'm certainly glad that you're taking care of yourself, no matter the reason."

"Yeah, well. I guess I just want to do what I can to make George feel like he isn't a burden. I know how much he worries about that. I just wish that he saw that I'm not trying to hover or overbear. I'm just trying to help."

"You don't think he appreciates your help?"

"I mean, he appreciates it sometimes. But he also kinda snaps at me a lot. Over little stuff. Dumb stuff. Like if I offer to do his dishes or his laundry or something and he yells at me for treating him like a kid."

Maria sighs, tucking a loose strand of hair behind her ear. "It's common for people with unresolved trauma to lash out at those closest to them. People they feel they can trust. People they don't think, on a subconscious level at the very least, will leave them."

"Well, he's right. He can take all the shots at me that he wants. I would never leave him."

"And that's a lovely notion. But the truth of the matter is that it's a very unhealthy coping skill—for all parties involved. Not only will the consistent vilification take a toll on you, Clay, but George will only end up feeling guilty for hurting you. It'll remind him of the way John used to treat him. It's important that he find healthier ways of processing and coping with his trauma."

“How?”

“For starters? Talking to someone in a professional setting. I have a number of other psychologists and psychiatrists in my practice that I could refer him to if he were interested.”

Dream picks at his cuticles, tearing at the skin until it's red and angry, one membrane away from bleeding. He knows that she's right, but he also knows that George will just snap at him if he brings it up. Besides, George seems to be adjusting just fine, for the most part. Dream can deal with a few months of tension if it gives George room to heal.

“I'll talk to him about it,” he assures her, but he's pretty sure it's just another lie.

- - -

George makes it home about five minutes before Dream, leaving him just enough time to stash the recently-purchased bottles. He doesn't drink a lot; he doesn't have a problem or anything. It's just that sometimes he wakes up in a cold sweat and he can't fall back to sleep unless he has something to calm his nerves. And rum seems to do just the trick.

“Hey,” he calls out, hearing the front door open.

“Hey.” Dream hooks his keys by the front door, shrugging off his jacket as George enters the room.

“So, Karl and Sapnap are flying out tomorrow and I know they're going to want to stream at least a few times while they're here, and I really don't want them getting a million donations asking about us, about me, so I was thinking we could stream for a little while today. Just to kinda let everyone know that I'm okay and that I'm here with you.”

“Yeah,” Dream says softly, walking over to him hesitantly. “I think that's a good idea. How much do you wanna tell them?”

“Not much. Not everything. Just that I'm okay. That I had a little incident with some self-harm a few months back but I'm okay now.”

“I think that's a good idea, but are you up for it?” Dream asks.

“Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I mean, you'll be there to help me stay calm and all, so I think I'll be just fine.”

“You want me to be in the video?”

“Yeah, of course,” George replies instantly. He hesitates then, fumbling for something less needy. “I mean, if you want to be. I mean, I want you there, but you don't have to be if you don't want to. It's not a big deal either way, really. It'll just be, like, a twenty minute thing. It's really honestly not even a big deal at all, so, like—”

“Hey,” Dream cuts in, chuckling lightly. “I'll always be there when you need me, idiot.”

George feels a warmth blossom across his cheeks as he trains his eyes on the ground. “Thank you,” he mumbles.

They get George signed into his Twitch account on his new PC, setting up a stream entitled, “A Brief Update.” Dream's concern bores holes into the side of George's head as he stares down the Start Stream button. Dream reaches out hesitantly, taking George's hand in his own. George looks

over at him, almost lost, like he's forgotten why he's even here.

Gently, Dream guides his hand to the mouse, scrolling over the start button, gaze still so piercing that George can't bare to break it. "Together?"

George nods, absently.

Click.

George's intro plays out as viewers roll in. As the number swells, so does George's anxiety. He's grounded only by the calloused hand draped lightly across his own.

George wishes, for the first time, that the stream would flop, but his community is steadfast in both their concern and their near-morbid interest. Their viewership seems to plateau around 400k, nearly a record for George. He can only imagine what will happen when he turns his face cam on to reveal Dream by his side.

Speaking of, Dream gives George's hand one last squeeze before pulling away to strap his mask on. "You ready?" he asks.

"Not really."

"We don't have to do this if you don't want to," Dream assures him. "You can still log off. You don't owe them anything."

George looks back at the near-endless viewer list, silent in waiting, concern growing steadily at the fact that George has disabled both chat and donations.

"Yes. I do."

And with that, George unmutes and turns on his face cam.

There's a sort of catharsis in it, in being seen like this—plain, almost vulnerable—for the first time in weeks now.

"Hey, guys," he starts, slipping easily into his over-excited persona. "So, I'm sure you all have a lot of questions and I'm going to do my best to answer some of them today, but I just want to start this all off by saying that I am okay. I've seen all of the love and support pouring in through social media over the past few weeks and it really does mean the world to me to have so many kind and caring people in my community, so I truly appreciate it, but I am okay. And to answer your second question: Yes." George looks purposefully to his left. "I'm here with Dream."

Dream waves. "Hey, guys."

"I'm going to be staying with Dream for a little while. Things have been pretty hectic lately and I really needed someone who could be there for me and support me through it." That part, for what it's worth, is not just false hope for his audience.

"I don't want to go into a whole lot of detail about what's going on at the moment," George continues. "But I do want to address briefly the elephant in the room. Trigger warning for mentions of self-harm and suicide in this next bit. If you're uncomfortable with that, feel free to click off for a while and you can come back in about five minutes."

George debates how to say what he needs to say, considers how much he's willing to divulge. He allows himself to tear down a single layer, to share the barest bones of his story.

“About three months ago, I was in a really dark place. There were some really... bad things going on in my life.”

Dream turns to face George begging a question even without looking at him. George shifts his hand toward Dream's, out of view of the camera. Dream takes it tightly in his own.

“I hurt myself. I... Well, there's no sugar coating it, really, is there? I tried to take my own life.

“I failed, obviously. And I'm so grateful that I did.” George grits his teeth, carrying on with the half-lies he's grown so used to. “Since then, I've gotten out of the situation that I was in and I'm doing a lot better. I don't feel like I'm trapped in that dark place anymore. I feel good.

“Dream has been a constant through all of this. He's been my person, ya know? The person I could count on to help me through all of it. The person I could rely on, always.” George laughs dryly as he recounts, “He actually flew out to England after he found out about the self-harm. That's when he asked me to come back to America with him.”

George goes on to explain a bit more about their upload schedules, as well as to request that they respect his and Dream's privacy through this whole ordeal. Dream jumps in with occasional affirmation, but remains generally quiet.

Finally, exhausted from even twenty minutes in his persona, George ends the stream, letting out a sigh of relief as he sinks further into his chair.

“That went better than I thought it would.”

Dream unstraps his mask, sinking into his seat as well. “Just don't check Twitter for a few hours. It always takes them a while for them to pull themselves together.”

George finds his gaze flickering continuously over to Dream's warm, tanned hands. He liked the way they felt against his skin. He wants to touch them again, wants to feel grounded again, but, somehow, he feels it wouldn't be appropriate. Instead, he pushes himself from his seat, throwing one last, “Thanks for streaming with me,” over his shoulder before retreating to his bedroom to smother himself in blankets that he can almost imagine are skin.

Chapter End Notes

I'm literally falling asleep rn so the editing here is shit but I really wanted to get this out tonight.

Another boring chapter, but it was necessary because,,,,, WOOHOO!!! We're finally onto the 4/5 feral boy meetup!!!! next chapter: Karl and Sapnap come to visit, realising quickly that George isn't as "fine" as he claims to be.

Comments give me happy chemicals <33

EDITOR'S NOTE: Hi there, friends. Two-months-later Casey. I've just realise this is a major continuity error because the last chapter said several weeks have passed since George started living with Dream. I can't really fix this without changing pretty much this entire chapter, so please just bare with me and pretend like this timeline works out haha. I give apologies and hugs :))

tonight, I'm fucking drunk

Chapter Summary

Karl and Sapnap come to visit, bearing some big news. George pretends everything's alright, until he can't pretend any longer.

Chapter Notes

tw: alcohol as an unhealthy coping mechanism, mentions of drugs (meth and morphine) (they're not actually talking about drugs. it's a metaphor, your honour.)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Somebody needs to take Karl's Monster privileges away.

Instantly upon seeing them at the airport, Karl breaks into a sprint, leaping into Dream's arms like they're in *The Notebook* or something. Dream stumbles back, awkwardly balancing the clingy boy in his arms. After a minute, Karl detaches himself from Dream, immediately tumbling, open-armed, into George.

Dream laughs at the stunned look on George's face as Karl holds tightly onto him. The warmth is nice in a way George refuses to admit to. He feigns annoyance as he brings reluctant arms up around Karl's waist.

Dream wheezes as he looks past Karl, seeing Sapnap stumble toward them, dragging two suitcases and two backpacks along with him. "Bellboy, huh?"

"I swear he only keeps me around for manual labour," Sap groans, dropping their stuff to give Dream a bro-hug. "It's good to see you, man."

"Same here."

Sapnap stalls in front of George for a second before holding his arms out and smirking. "What do you say, Gogy?"

George rolls his eyes but wraps his arms tightly around Sap's waist. Sapnap lets the hug go on just a few seconds too long, waiting until George pulls away.

Karl looks up at Dream and whistles. "Sap was right about you being a honkin' giant. I think you might be taller than Jimmy."

"Wait, I almost forgot!" Sap pulls George close again. "Stand up straight."

George groans, having hoped that Sapnap would forget about their stupid bet. He presses his back to his friend's, feeling like he's back in secondary school. Karl runs his hand across the tops of their heads and shrieks. "Sap's taller!"

“By like a centimetre!”

“Still taller!” Sap taunts.

George shoves him playfully. “God, I forgot how annoying you are.”

- - -

The drive home is a wreck, with a volume to rival any TommyInnit stream. Sapnap shouts the lyrics to every song that comes on the radio, even when he doesn’t really know them, and Karl tries to talk over him, rambling on about all the things he wants to do while they’re in town, which only makes Sapnap sing louder in an attempt to drown him out. The whole ordeal is giving Dream a headache, and he worries about George. Surely he must be overwhelmed by all of this. Yet George looks amused and more present than he has in weeks—months, even.

Maybe he was right about me being overbearing. He seems like he’s doing just fine.

When they finally get home, Dream helps Sapnap with the luggage while George shows Karl around the house.

Sap leans against the car, almost casual if not for the obvious tension in his jaw. “Karl was freaking out before we got here.”

“Yeah, well, I was a little nervous myself,” Dream admits. “It’s not every day you meet your best friend’s boyfriend of... God, how long’s it been now?”

“Two years next month.”

“He’s even prettier in person. Don’t know how he got stuck with you,” Dream deadpans.

“No clue, but I’m not asking any questions.” Sap shifts his weight, fidgeting like he’s trapped beneath his own skin. He works up the courage to ask, “Can I show you something?”

Dream drops whatever bit they had going on, falling serious at his friend’s tone. “Yeah, of course. Is everything alright?”

Sapnap sets his backpack on the ground, kneeling down to rifle through it. He finds what he was looking for and stands again, holding it out with one trembling hand. A small, black velvet box.

“Oh my god,” Dream breathes as Sap opens the box to display the biggest diamond Dream’s ever seen set on a thick gold band. It takes a minute to really sink in. His best friend, the man he still thinks of like his goofy little brother, is getting married.

Dream wraps Sapnap up in a hug—a real one, too. None of that bro-hug-to-serve-masculinity shit like they pulled at the airport. “I’m so proud of you, man.”

“Thanks,” Sap mumbles into his hoodie. They pull apart, wordlessly agreeing not to mention the tears shining in Sapnap’s eyes.

“When are you gonna ask him?”

“I wanna do it on our anniversary. There’s this really nice tea garden about an hour from our house. It’s super cliché, but he loves it there. I’m thinking we can have a nice meal and then afterwards, while we’re walking through the gardens...”

Dream huffs, running a hand through his hair. “God, Sap, I can’t believe it. You’re getting

married,” he mutters, more to himself than anything, walking the fine line between pride and envy.

Sap blushes, scraping his sneakers against the pavement. “Well, I haven’t even asked yet. He might not say yes.”

“Dude.” Dream levels him with a stare. “He’s almost as much of a simp as you are. He’s gonna say yes.”

Sap looks up with hopeful eyes, and there’s that anxious kid Dream remembers. “You really think so?”

Dream ruffles his hair, laughing when he squirms away. “I know so. Now, come on. The boys are waiting for us. We can’t give them too much time to plot.”

Sap tucks the box back in his bag, tossing it over his shoulder and helping Dream with the luggage.

- - -

“He’s gonna propose, ya know.”

He says it so nonchalantly, picking at his chipping nail polish, that George doesn’t even process it until a full minute later.

“What?” George sputters.

“Sapnap. He’s gonna propose.”

“What? How do you know?”

“I was trying to steal one of his hoodies—theft is the highest form of love, ya know—and I found the ring box in the back of his closet.”

“Oh my god,” George squeals, smacking Karl’s arm. “Are you gonna say yes?”

Karl smiles, easy, content. “Of course.”

“Wow,” George sighs. “That’s amazing, Karl. I’m so happy for you. It’s just… Wow.”

“Yeah, I know. I spent a week just, like, processing. I mean, it just feels so sudden. We’ve only been dating for two years, and I don’t think I’m quite ready to get married, but I like the idea of being engaged, ya know? I like the idea of belonging to someone, of having them belong to me. Maybe that sounds antiquated, but it’s true.”

George lets the words sink in, feeling the weight of them as they seep through his skin and flood his dying veins.

“You really love him, don’t you?”

“Yeah,” Karl laughs, absently. “I really love him.”

“And he loves you, too.” George says it like a statement, but it’s more of a question, somehow. One to which Karl answers:

“If I know anything in the world.”

George pushes the words from his consciousness, sickly sweet *I love yous* whispered into his

trembling body, prayers unanswered to gods long dead. George knows that he was loved. But he doesn't know what that means anymore.

"I'm really happy for you," George chokes out, stumbling into another clumsy hug just so he doesn't have to look Karl in the eye right now.

Sapnap appears in the doorway, lugging a suitcase and a backpack into the room, Dream following close behind. "Hitting on my boyfriend, George? I expected this from Dream, but not you."

George knows he's just teasing, but he feels too exhausted for banter right now. He hears stale words rattling around inside his skull and they just won't go away.

Dream eyes George cautiously, like a bloodhound for anxiety. He drops the suitcase and backpack he'd been carrying on the floor beside the bed. "Why don't you two get settled while George and I order some pizza and set up a card game. Uno?"

Sap laughs. "A little early in the week to be destroying friendships, don't you think?"

"Never," Dream assures him, leaving the room and gesturing for George to follow.

Once they're safely in the kitchen, Dream looks George dead in the eye and asks, "How are you doing?"

George forces himself to smile when he says, "I'm good. I'm really, really good."

After a long night full of screams and threats and draw-fours, the group retires to their respective bedrooms. Everyone's exhausted. Everyone, that is, except for Karl, who's too hyped up on Monster and adrenaline to sleep, feeling sweaty and restrained in Sapnap's arms. He needs to burn some energy.

He slips out of Sapnap's hold, wandering toward the kitchen for a glass of water.

He's mid-way down the hall when he hears low voices coming from George's room. He raps gently on the door and George calls out, just a little too loudly for one o'clock in the morning, "Come in!"

Karl opens the door hesitantly, a sinking sort of feeling taking over his limbs. He sees George, bathed in blue light from his laptop, sitting up in bed, half-empty bottle of Bacardi in hand.

"Hey Georgie," Karl whispers, slinking further into the room. George pauses whatever he was watching. "Whatcha got there, bud?"

George just hums, holding up the bottle, watching the liquid slosh around haphazardly.

Karl laughs uncomfortably, hovering at the side of George's bed. "Yeah, no, sorry, wrong question, I guess. I can see what you've got there. I meant why are you drinking alone at one in the morning while watching..." Karl peaks around the side of George's laptop. *I thought it couldn't get any worse.* "Grey's Anatomy."

"Couldn't sleep. Well, I could, but then I woke up. I honestly don't know why I'm watching Grey's Anatomy, though. This entire show just makes me so glad I'm gay. I think Dream is the only queer person I've ever met who genuinely enjoys this shit." George halts his drunken rant, squinting hazily up at his friend. "Do you like Grey's Anatomy, Karl?"

Karl bites his cheek, trying to work out this whole situation in his head. He's never been good under pressure, always been the one to keep things light-hearted. Sappnap, he's always been the emotional one, the one people come to when they need comfort or advice.

Karl clears his throat and asks, "Hey, bud, do you mind handing me that bottle?"

"You want a shot?"

"Yeah," he lies, taking the bottle from George. He presses his lips to the opening and fakes a sip, quickly placing the bottle on the floor beside George's nightstand. George makes grabby hands for it, but Karl ignores him, asking instead, "Do you mind if I sit?"

George moves over a few inches, patting the spot beside him.

Karl sits, popping his knuckles while he works up the courage to meet his friend's eye and ask, "What's going on, George?"

He watches as the shields go up behind George's eyes, blocking off the vast emotion he'd seen just minutes prior. "What do you mean?"

"Drinking alone in your room while watching Grey's Anatomy? I literally could not think of a more depressing activity if I tried."

"I'm an adult," George grumbles, staring holes into the sheets. "I can drink if I want to."

"George, you know I've got nothing against drinking. You're drinking alone. And I've been awake all night, never heard you get up. You keep that bottle in your room, don't you?"

"Fuck off, Karl. We didn't fucking invite you here to take care of me, alright? I don't need your help and I sure as fuck don't need your judgment."

"I'm not judging you George, but I do want to help," Karl insists. "I care about you, George. We all do."

"You don't even know what that means."

"What?"

"You don't know what it means to be cared for. And you sure as hell don't know what it means to be loved."

Karl scoffs. "What the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

"I mean, you've never been loved the way that I was loved," George snaps. "I was loved, Karl. No one seems to get that, but I was. I was loved with a depth you could never even begin to understand. I was loved so much that it hurt, inside and out. And then, I left, and sometimes I don't even know why. And now... I don't know if I'll ever love again. I don't know that I could ever be satisfied with the simple ebb and flow of a tamer love after the speed I shot for years on end. My nerves are dulled, Karl. I'm ruined."

Karl stares, unfocused, at George, bleakly aware of the broken state of the man before him. There's nothing he can do to fix him. And yet, that's what George fears most, isn't it?

"You're not ruined," Karl says it with a confidence he does not feel. "And what you're describing... George, there's so much more to love than that. The volatility you think you need?"

It's not the only form of passion.

“George, someday, someone is going to love you with so much passion that you’ll know they’d walk through fire if it meant you’d never feel pain. The intensity of that love... Well, Gogs, if the toxicity was speed, this kind of love is morphine. Slow and lazy, warmth flooding through your veins, soft kisses and gentle touches that make your heart ache in your chest. And you never have to worry about a bad high, and you never have to worry about the comedown, because it’s just one long night with all the stars out just for you.”

George looks up with tearful eyes, looking all the more like a child, and maybe that’s all he is. Just a dumb kid so far in over his head. Terrified, and looking for a comfort he’s too afraid to request.

Karl shifts to face him, opening his arms wide. George falls in, tears streaming down his face in the same instant. He trembles in Karl’s hold, nails digging into his chest, heaving desperately for air. They stay there for a while, Karl tracing shapes around the small of George’s back until his breathing slows and the shaking stops. Karl shifts them so they’re laying down, George tangled up in his arms, still awake, but hardly aware, in desperate need of one night’s sleep without nightmares or the agony of waking up from them alone.

Just one night of peace.

Chapter End Notes

OKAY Y'ALL I HAVE A LIFE UPDATE!!

Remember when I told y'all that my dad asked to see this story and I was super sleep-deprived, so I sent it and then he never commented on it and I was being all anxious about it for a while?

So, apparently, he just never fucking saw the email ASDJKNAD but he just read it and he really, really liked it, so that gave me many happy chemicals :)))

He also lowkey thought Dream just loved George as a friend, though, and that specifically is why I hate straight people (/j). I really wrote an entire ass scene of a Florida man cuddling his pillow while imagining it's a British twink just for a vaguely homophobic white man to say they were friends smh my head

Also, for any of you wondering, the Karlnap proposal thing literally wasn't planned. It was one of those things where I sat down to write, essentially blacked out, and then an hour later I reread what I wrote and found out that my characters had decided to get married without consulting me. But let's be honest, this fic really needed the fluff and hope that Karlnap provides. They're like the perfect exemplar of everything George and Dream want but don't think they deserve. And big brother!dream just makes every fic better soooooo

I also posted the ring that I envisioned Sarnap proposing with to my [tumblr](#) and my [twitter](#), so you should go check that out.

Maybe if you wanna,,,,, you can give me a follow?? I crave attention :))

EDIT: I think the links are broken, so:

caseywond3r.tumblr.com
twitter.com/caseywond3r

but now, I break against the dirt

Chapter Summary

Last night's events make their way back to Dream. Dream confronts George and asks him for a favour.

Chapter Notes

tw: food as a coping mechanism, mentions of alcohol as a coping mechanism

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As sunlight streams in around the edges of the window shades, Sapnap reaches out blindly for a warm body to snuggle into. He feels only cold sheets in his path, reluctantly opening his eyes to find an empty bed.

He scrolls through his phone, waiting for Karl to get back from the bathroom, but some twenty minutes pass without event. It's only seven in the morning; there's no way Karl is actually up right now.

Reluctantly, Sap withdraws himself from the warm blankets and slips on a T-shirt, wandering toward the kitchen to make himself a cup of coffee. He stops short in front of George's door, noticing that it's wide open, with two wiry bodies tangled together beneath the sheets. He smiles to himself, leaning against the doorframe and bathing in the domesticity of it for a minute before retreating back to the kitchen to make himself a cup of coffee.

Maybe twenty minutes later, Karl wanders out into the front room, where Sapnap's stood by the window, sipping on black coffee and watching doves play on the lawn. He wraps his arms lazily around his boyfriend's waist and hooks his chin over his shoulder.

Sapnap sets his coffee on the window ledge, turning in Karl's embrace. "Ya know, finding my boyfriend in bed with another man? Not exactly how I like to start my days." Karl doesn't return his playful smile, though, looking all the more exhausted after a night's rest. "Babe? You okay?"

Karl just buries his face in Sap's chest, breathing in the scent of coffee and comfort, listening to the beating in his chest and trying to slow his own pounding, aching heart to match it.

Sap just holds him for a minute, knowing how badly he needs it, before pulling back a bit to look him in the eye. "What's wrong, bug?"

Karl opens his mouth, then closes it, pausing, thinking, and asking instead, "Can we sit?"

Sapnap leads Karl over to the couch, wrapping his arm tightly around his shoulders. "Talk to me."

Karl studies his hands, twisting his knuckles and picking at his nails, looking anywhere but at Sap as he confesses, "George isn't doing as well as he says he is."

Sapnap's breath catches in his throat. "What happened? Is he okay? Are *you* okay?"

"I'm okay," Karl assures him. "He's okay, too. I mean, not really, but he's not gonna hurt himself again or anything. Or at least, I don't think so. I think he's just... Sad. Really, really sad."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I couldn't sleep last night so I got up to get a glass of water and I heard him watching a show in his room, so I peaked in and... Well, he was plastered. I asked him why he was drinking and he just kind of... I don't even know. He wasn't really making sense. He just kept talking about how he didn't know what love felt like or if he'd ever find it again... I don't know. I don't know, Sap. Something's really fucking wrong and I don't know what it is or how to fix it and I tried to help last night, but I just don't know—"

Sapnap wraps his arms tightly around his trembling lover, one hand tangled in his hair, rocking him back and forth and hushing him softly. "You did everything right. You did the best you knew how to and I'm so, so proud of you. This wasn't your problem to fix. You did everything right, bug."

They stay like that for a while until Karl falls back to sleep, still emotionally and physically exhausted, drooling into Sap's chest, who doesn't even think of moving him.

"God, I forgot you get up at, like, the crack of fucking dawn."

Sapnap jolts out of his semi-consciousness, glancing over his shoulder to find that Dream's finally awake. Sap holds a finger up to his lips, casting confusion on Dream's face until he walks around the side of the couch to see Karl curled up into Sapnap's side, sound asleep.

He laughs to himself, speaking softer now. "You guys have a room, ya know."

Sapnap rolls his eyes and carefully extracts himself from Karl, but he stirs awake anyway, grey eyes fluttering open as he makes grabby hands at his boyfriend.

"Go back to sleep, bug," Sap whispers into his forehead, handing him a pillow to snuggle with instead. Karl nods, thoughtlessly, drifting back to sleep almost immediately.

Dreams rolls his eyes, fondly. "Long night?"

"You have no idea," Sap huffs, grabbing his mug off the window ledge and tossing the cold coffee into the sink.

"It's like ten o'clock in the morning, what could have possibly pissed you off this early in the day?"

Sapnap rifles through the pantry, pulling out a box of cereal. "It wasn't today."

"Hey, I was gonna make pancakes for everyone, so if you wanna wait, like, twenty minutes—" Dream cuts himself off at Sapnap's death glare.

Sap pours half the box into a bowl, adding some milk and not even bothering to sit down before he digs in.

"Dude, what happened? The last time I saw you like this, you dropped out of college, like, the next

day.”

Sap glares up at Dream, frustration building in his stomach and clawing up through his throat, no clear destination. “Do you know why Karl is so tired today?”

Dream huffs a nervous laugh. “Because he lives on Monster?”

“Because George had some sort of fucking breakdown last night and Karl was the one picking up the pieces.”

Every ounce of amusement falls from Dream’s face. “What?”

“Yeah. Apparently Karl found him alone in his room, wasted, last night and he just lost it. Karl had to stay with him all night just to keep him calm.”

Dream swears under his breath, leaning back against the counter to rub a hand over his stubble. “I’m so sorry.”

Sapnap wants to yell at him. For no reason, really. It’s not like Dream is George’s keeper or something. He can’t be expected to keep him in line all of the time. Yet, still, his boyfriend’s in the next room over, feeling like a disappointment for not being about to help his friend, and there’s nothing that Sapnap can do about it. So, he wants to lash out.

But then, he sees the look on Dream’s face—the excruciating pain simmering behind his eyes, the harsh clench of his jaw—and he realises that there’s nothing he could say or do that would make Dream feel worse than he does right now. Sap feels like his chest is on fire just from watching his love cry. Dream’s been watching his deteriorate for a year now.

Sapnap takes a deep breath and fixes his posture. “It’s not your fault,” he says, walking over to Dream and laying a gentle hand on his forearm. Dream shatters under the touch, shaking with silent sobs as he clings desperately to the strong facade he’s been holding up for so long.

Sapnap pulls him into a hug. “It’s not your fault,” he hushes, brushing his fingers through Dream’s tangled hair. “It’s not your fault. Not even a little.”

Dream sobs silently into his chest, noises clawing desperately up his throat, but he pushes them back down. “I don’t know what to do. I’m so fucking far in over my head, man. I thought it would be easy. I thought that if I could just get him out, get him safe... I thought it would be some stupid fucking Hallmark movie, ya know? Nice, little happily-ever-after in suburbia. I thought I could make him happy.”

Sap doesn’t know what to say anymore. Maybe there’s nothing left to say to a man so set in his chivalry. So he just holds him until the shaking stops, knowing he hasn’t let himself be held since he was a child.

When Dream finally pulls back, he washes his face and clears his throat, continuing on with the pancakes as though nothing happened at all.

Karl sits up on the couch, shooting Sapnap a look that says he’s been awake for a while now. Dream glances up for a second, catching the moment in the corner of his eye.

“Hey, Sleeping Beauty,” Dream calls out, voice clear and chipper. “I’m making pancakes.”

Sap shoots Karl a small shake of his head. Dream needs to feel strong, needs to feel like the protector. It’s killing him to watch George fall apart, but it would kill him faster to know that

anyone could see how badly he's been hurting.

Karl smiles. "Pancakes sound great."

- - -

Dream waits until that afternoon, when Sap whisks Karl off under the guise of wanting to show him some bakery a few blocks away that he used to love back when he lived here.

When he's finally got him alone, Dream wanders down the hall to George's office, pausing in the hallway, wondering how long he can put this conversation off for.

He forces himself to knock.

"Come in," George calls.

Dream opens the door, seeing George by his computer, coding what looks to be a new mod.

"Hey," Dream says, jamming his hands awkwardly into his pockets.

George finishes the line he's working on before turning around in his chair. "Hey."

"We need to talk."

George laughs awkwardly. "Okay? Uh, have a seat, I guess."

Dream pulls a chair away from the wall, perching hesitantly on its edge, like he might need to escape at a moment's notice. "Karl told Sapnap about what happened last night. And Sapnap told me."

George steels his face, fighting valiantly against the heat rising in his cheeks. "Well, you know how Karl can be. Overzealous."

"He said you were drunk."

"I wasn't drunk," George corrects. "I was drinking. But I wasn't drunk."

"Even if I believed that, that wouldn't make it okay. You were drinking alone in your room and then, when Karl confronted you about it... George, he says you had some sort of breakdown."

George just rolls his eyes, as though the memory itself is an inconvenience. "I didn't have a breakdown. I was upset. I think I have the right to be, after everything that happened."

"Of course you do, George. We're not having this conversation because you got upset. We're having this conversation because you were drinking to cope with feelings I didn't even know you were having."

"I wasn't aware that I had to inform you of every feeling I have," George snarks. "I'm still an adult, Dream. I can take care of myself."

"Clearly not, if your idea of 'taking care of yourself' is getting pissdrunk and then having a panic attack."

George groans, slinking back in his chair. "I didn't have a fucking panic attack. I'm fine. Can't you just fucking leave me alone? You're not my knight in shining fucking armour, Dream. I don't need you. I don't even want you."

Dream closes his eyes, clenching his fists until his hideously-bitten nails cut into his palms. He breathes out slowly, trying to calm his aching heart, and growls, "Will you just stop it already?"

"It's the truth," George huffs.

Dream stands, throwing his hands up in frustration. "What the fuck do you want from me, George?"

George doesn't say anything, the silence echoing around Dream until he fully comprehends the position they're in. He finds George cowering before him, curled in on himself, eyes squeezed tightly shut, just waiting...

Dream looks at his own hands, sees how, to someone who was expecting no better, he could look like he was poised to slap him.

He lowers his hands, dropping to his knees so the two are eye-level. "George. Open your eyes, bud."

Reluctantly, George looks up, glassy eyes meeting Dream's sincere gaze.

"I wasn't gonna hit you, George."

"I know."

"I would rather die than hurt you."

"I know."

"I didn't mean to raise my voice at you, either. I'm just worried, but that wasn't the right way to express it."

"It's okay."

"It's not. I know yelling is a trigger for you and I'm sorry that I wasn't more considerate of that."

"I didn't really think you were gonna hit me," George mumbles, breaking eye contact to stare holes into his hands where they lay folded on his lap. "I know you would never do that. I'm sorry if I offended you."

"I'm not offended," Dream assures him. "I know you weren't seeing me. You were seeing a much larger man raise his hand at you. But, George, you have to see that this is exactly what has me so worried. You're not you lately. You're not present. You're stuck somewhere in your London flat, listening to angry footsteps in the hallway. You're hurting and you won't let me help."

Silence suffocates the sentiment. "I'm sorry."

"I don't want you to be sorry, Gogs. I want you to be happy."

George dares to glance up for just a fraction of a second, eyes glassy with tears, but not numb, not distant. He's in the room, warm and safe, maybe even content. "What if I don't deserve it?"

"To be happy?" George nods weakly. "Oh, Gogy... If anyone in this world deserves to be happy, it's you."

George doesn't say anything for a minute, just stares down at his hands, stretching his fingers absently. "What do you want me to do?"

“My therapist—She says she can refer you to someone else in her practice. A psychologist, and maybe a psychiatrist from there. I know you think you’re okay, I know you think you’re coping, I know you think you don’t need anyone, but *I need you*. I need you to be safe and healthy and happy. We’ve got two out of three, now, Gogs. That’s further than we ever thought we’d get. We can do this. We’re so close.”

Another suffocating silence.

“Why do you love me?” The words sound something desperate falling from George’s lips. “I mean, I just make you feel sad. I snap at you all the time. I can’t be there for you in the ways you want me to. I can barely be there for you in the ways you need me to. So, why do you love me?”

Dream pauses, jaw clenching and unclenching, the immensity of the question washing over him like a dozen strikes. “Do you remember when we first met? I was... I was seventeen and stupid. I would get in fights. I would steal money from my parents for cigarettes. I was such an asshole. And I met you and you were just so *good*. Not, like, muffinhead sort of good. Just... good. It radiated off of you and... it made me want to be good, too.

“You’re so good, George. Even if you can see it, you’re just so goddamn *good*. Kind, empathetic, so determined to make everyone feel welcome and included. Smart, so goddamn smart, it’s terrifying. I mean, really, Gogs, I watch you work sometimes and I’m just blown away by how fucking smart you are. And there’s something indescribable, too. You have this way of making whoever you’re talking to feel like the only person in the room. You make the people around you feel so special, so important, so *worthy*. Talking to you has always been the best part of my day and now... Seeing you every day... You’re my everything, George. You’re my first and my last and my everything in between and *that* is why I love you. Always and forever.”

George is quiet for so long that Dream thinks, somehow, that must have been the wrong answer, and he’s about to retract all the love that lived in his voice when George speaks again. “I’ll do it. The therapy, or whatever. I’ll do it.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

Dream opens his arms, a wordless request, and George leans forward, draping his arms across Dream’s shoulders.

“Thank you, Gogy.”

“For what?”

“For taking care of my best friend.”

“Well,” George huffs. “Thanks for *being* his best friend.”

“Always.”

“And forever?”

“And forever.”

I used "bug" as a petname in ONE fic and now I have Sapnap-Calling-Karl-Bug Brainrot™

Also, sorry this chapter took so long to post. It was originally about half as long, but then I decided last minute that I wanted to add in that last scene.

Also also, this happened a while ago but I kept forgetting to mention it. Somebody added this work to a collection twice (I forget what the collection was called) and I took it out. I was under the impression that collections were like series and that I had just accidentally added my book to something random. If that was you and you're wondering why I took it out, please know that it wasn't intentional and you can feel free to add it back if you'd like.

Comments give me happy chemicals <3333

P.S. Is there anything in particular you'd like to see Gogy talk to his new therapist about? Open to suggestions!!

give me one beat to fill my glass

Chapter Summary

George goes to therapy.

Chapter Notes

big thanks to @Dr0plet and @Inked_Parchment for the suggestions on this chapter!!

cw: mentions of alcohol

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George is on his fourth shrink in as many weeks and it's starting to piss him off.

The first had visibly flinched when he mentioned he was gay, her hand flying up to her neck to fiddle with the gold chain tucked into her blouse. She went on and on about how tough being gay must be, unbearably pitying, until George felt like he might just pull his hair out.

By the time Dream came to pick him up, George had sworn off therapy altogether, insisting that it was a waste of time. But then, Dream got all quiet and angsty and George couldn't stand the disappointment radiating off of him. They found another therapist within the week.

This one had been nice enough, but hadn't talked much. He'd mostly left George to talk his own issues out, hardly ever piping in with so much as a question, let alone any advice. And seeing as George hadn't even wanted to come in the first place, the session was filled almost entirely by awkward silence.

He pouted again in the car until Dream offered to buy him a McFlurry.

The third one was a psychiatrist—an outlier, for sure, but she had claimed on her website to focus not only on medication, but on a “therapeutic path to healing,” as well. The Xanax scrip he walked out of there with begged to differ.

Dream had personally vetoed her.

So now, here George sat, in a plush leather chair, being stared down by a rather intimidating man named—and don't you fucking laugh, now—Chad.

They stumble their way through pleasantries and getting-to-know-yous, but George doesn't put his heart into it. He's grown bored of these fruitless appointments. It's not long before they reach the dreaded, “So, why are we here today, George?”

He hasn't yet told a single one of the counsellors about John. He hasn't felt comfortable enough to do so. He tells himself that it's because he's a public figure and he can't trust just anyone. Any amount of introspection would prove that to be a lie, but George hasn't been in the habit of introspection ever since he dumped his rum down the drain.

“I’ve been having some issues lately. Just been... I dunno, just been feeling kind of shit, I guess. My roommate was worried about me, so he bugged me into coming here.”

“Why do you think you’ve been feeling bad lately?”

“I don’t know,” George lies.

Chad seems to see through George’s front, but he doesn’t point it out. He takes a different approach. “You mentioned that your roommate encouraged you to come here. Why is that?”

George hesitates, trying to formulate an answer that won’t incriminate him. “He knows that I’ve been having a tough go of it lately. He’s... He cares a lot. Worries a lot. It’s hard to hide it from him when I’m not feeling well.”

Chad presses his lips together, studying George for a minute before leaning back in his chair. He taps his wedding band and says, “Yeah, my roommate was like that, too. That’s why I married him.”

The slightest tension is lifted from George’s shoulders at the idea that, at the very least, this man understands one part of him, something so integral to his human experience while still not being *all* of him.

“He likes me,” George blurts. “A lot. That’s why he takes care of me. Makes sure I eat and don’t drink and stuff.”

George flushes with embarrassment at the words that spilled from his mouth without his consult, champagne exploding from its glass containment, but Chad just hums and asks, “Do you struggle with alcohol?”

“Not exactly,” George drawls, fighting to restore the wall between himself and this stranger. “I mean, when I first moved in with him, I would sometimes use alcohol to cope with things, but I wouldn’t really say I had a problem. I haven’t had a drink in a month, since he found out about it.”

“He’s a good influence, then?”

“Yeah.”

“When did you two move in together?”

“About... three months ago? Yeah, right around then. It was right after I moved here from England.”

“And why did you move?”

And here they are. Back right where they started. *Why are you here? Why are you broken?* But now... He almost wants to talk. He can’t quite pinpoint why. He just feels like he should.

He can’t give up everything, but he can give up something. The smallest step toward salvation.

“I broke up with my boyfriend.”

“I see. And you felt like you needed a fresh start?”

“Well, yes,” George starts. “That’s part of why I moved. But also... Well, Dre—Clay—my roommate, that is—He, uh—Well, my ex and I didn’t have the healthiest relationship. Clay—He was the one who convinced me that I deserved better. He promised that if I left my boyfriend, I

could stay with him. He said that he would help me get better. And he's stood by that promise every day."

Chad smiles, almost to himself. "He sounds like a good man."

"He is. He's the best man I know."

Chad clears his throat, starting back in on more serious matters. "You say you and your ex had a rather unhealthy relationship. What was that like for you?"

George opens his mouth, silver lie on the tip of his tongue, waiting for the moment he lets it roll once again, but he hesitates. He doesn't feel like lying anymore. He doesn't feel like telling the truth, either, but he doesn't feel like lying. "I'm not ready to talk about that yet."

Chad nods in understanding. "That's okay. This is only our first session together and you've already told me a lot. You should take this at the pace that feels most comfortable to you."

"I didn't even wanna come here," George huffs. "I mean, no offence to you, but I just didn't really want to come and blabber on about all my bullshit problems like some primadonna, ya know?"

"But you came anyway. You did something you didn't want to do because you knew, ultimately, that it's what you needed. I think that's something worth celebrating."

"I'll pop the champagne," George mumbles, sputtering when he realises the context of his situation.

Chad just chokes on poorly-suppressed laughter. "Maybe stick to confetti."

Dream waits in the car with baited breath. George has yet to come out of one of these appointments without a kicked-puppy scowl on his face and Dream doesn't know how many more chances he can convince George to take.

Finally, George walks out of the building. He doesn't look happy, but he doesn't look pissed off either. He's holding a timecard.

As George gets settled in the passenger's seat, Dream works up the courage to ask, "So, how did it go?"

"It went fine," George mumbles.

"Fine?"

"Yeah, fine. I mean, like, it was good, I guess. I made another appointment for next week."

Dream's face lights up, a burdening weight lifted from his shoulders. "That's awesome. I'm so glad it worked out."

"It's not a big deal."

"It's a big deal to *me*," Dream insists. "I'm proud of you, Gogy. I know being open with people is a challenge for you."

A blush creeps up George's neck as he rolls his eyes. "Alright, Nicholas Sparks, pack it up. Let's get going."

Dream laughs, sneaking one last glance to his right before turning his key in the ignition.

“Ya know,” George hums, “if you really wanted to show me how proud you are, I’m kinda in the mood for a Harry Potter marathon.”

Dream slams dramatically on the brakes in the middle of the parking lot. “Are you really using *therapy* as an excuse to *manipulate* me into watching Harry Potter with you?”

“Yes,” George huffs, crossing his arms over his chest. “You’ve never seen them and that’s a sin. I’m simply helping you to reach enlightenment.”

“You’re such an idiot.”

Without a thought, an ice-cold hand finds its way over to the tanned one resting against the centre console, wrapping around it without purpose.

Dream’s breath hitches at the contact, shocking George back to reality. “I’m sorry,” he rushes, pulling his hand back like it burns. “I wasn’t thinking about—”

“No, no, it’s okay.” Dream reaches across, taking George’s hand in his own, rubbing his calloused thumb over his knuckles. “I know how you meant it.”

The absent seeking of comfort. The indiscriminate desperation for a constant.

He feels broken, but in a beautiful sort of way. He thinks he’d break forever just to live in the feeling of skin against his own.

Chapter End Notes

I’ve said this with literally every therapy chapter so far, but this felt so awkward and plotless. I’ve literally had this sitting in my drafts for like a week, trying to edit it, but I kept getting bored and frustrated with it, so this is what you get. Next chapter will be all fluff to make up for it.

Speaking of next chapter, the next few are kind of filler fluff chapters because I wanted to establish a healthy basis for their relationship instead of just jumping right into it when George is just starting to heal. So, feel free to comment your favourite fluffy, could-be-platonic, could-be-romantic ideas and I’ll include them if I can :)))

Also, this has been a PSA: You deserve to have a therapist who makes you feel understood and validated. That doesn’t necessarily mean that they’ll always agree with you or that they should encourage potentially harmful behaviours, but it does mean that they should never make you feel like you or your problems are unimportant. If you’re feeling that way, it may be time to look for a better fit.

Much love <33

EDIT: so sorry if you saw my editor’s note at the top, I had to post this from my phone, so I realised after the fact that I accidentally deleted something and had to fix it. thank you for your patience!!

but now I break against the dirt, along with our cafés

Chapter Summary

George tries to make Dream breakfast, but it doesn't quite pan out. Dream, however, refuses to let the morning go to waste.

This is absolutely fluff without plot and I refuse to apologise for it.

Chapter Notes

Big thanks to BooksRMyDrugOfChoice for the idea for the chapter!!

tw: brief mention of suicide (via cutting and overdose)

cw: food, knives

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream wakes up to the screeching of sirens all around him.

Instantly, images of George lying on the bathroom tile, wrists slit open or OD'd on something he'd bought on a street corner, flood Dream's mind and he sprints out of his room without a thought.

He's somehow relaxed at the image of George standing in a plume of smoke. The entire kitchen reeks of egg and George has dead eyes that tell stories long past, but everything's okay. He's okay.

"George? What the hell are you doing?"

No movement. No acknowledgment of anyone or anything around him.

"George?" Dream reaches out to get his attention, but the minute his hand meets his shoulder, George jumps a foot in the air, nearly stumbling into the smoking stove.

He looks terrified.

George seems to snap out of whatever trance he was in, rushing to open a nearby window to let out some of the smoke, hoping to end the obnoxious ringing of the alarm. "I'm sorry," he mumbles. "This wasn't what I meant to do. I was just trying—I was just trying to make you breakfast. Ya know, as a—as a thank you—for everything. I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to make a mess and I'll clean it up, I promise—"

Dream disables the smoke alarm while George babbles to himself. No sense in trying to ground him while this thing is screaming over them both.

He's just gotten the frame loose enough to stop the screeching, when an eerily human screech sounds behind him and something metal clatters to the ground. When he turns around, George is clutching at his own flushed hand, biting back tears.

Dream curses under his breath as he inspects George's hand. It's inflamed, but not blistered, yet. Probably second-degree. Dream grabs some ice from the freezer, wrapping it in paper towels before bringing it back to George and helping him clench his hand around it.

Dream laughs to himself, brain half-asleep again now that there's no imminent danger to keep him alert. "Well, good morning to you, too."

George doesn't laugh.

"Are you alright?"

George just looks away, blinking back tears.

"Does it hurt?"

George shakes his head no.

"Alright, Gogs," Dream sighs, leading George away from the kitchen. "Let's get you on the couch, okay? It's way too early for any sane person to be up anyway."

Dream helps George over to the couch, holding his hand to keep it clenched tight over the ice. "Do you wanna tell me why you tried to burn down my kitchen at seven o'clock in the morning?"

"I wasn't trying to burn it down," George mumbles. "I was trying to make you breakfast."

"Gogy, no offense, but you suck at cooking."

"I know."

"I'm just teasing you."

"I know."

An awkward silence falls between them as Dream struggles to read the emotions playing at those sepia eyes. "What's going on in that head of yours?"

George shrugs half-heartedly.

"Come on, George. You have to talk to me when something happens. It's the only way I'll know how to help."

Dream tries to reach out to hold him, but George flinches away. Even his burnt hand feels unnaturally tense under Dream's.

George seems too lost to the world to be of any help saving himself, so Dream combs back through the masses of data he has saved to the corner of his brain that revolves solely around George.

"I burnt the dinner."

Fuck.

"George? Can you look at me?" Reluctantly, George meets his eye. "You know I'm not mad, right?"

George doesn't say a word.

Dream hates this. He hates all of it—when he yells, when he cries, when he lashes out—but he hates this most of all. When he just looks so *dead*. When he looks so tired of being alive that he just checks out. When there's nothing Dream can do to bring him back.

But Dream was never one to call it. He would fight until the corpse was rotting on the floor of his living room.

“Alright,” he huffs, standing and pulling George up with him. “I’m gonna teach you how to cook the best damn omelette you’ve ever had in your life.”

As he cleans out the pan George had burnt himself on minutes prior, Dream calls out, “Hey, Alexa, play my daily mix on Spotify.” George rolls his eyes at the generic pop music that floods the putrid kitchen. “*The most important ingredient in a good omelette is shitty pop music written by gorgeous women about mediocre-looking men, Sun Tzu.*”

“You’re such an idiot.”

“Sorry, who almost burnt down the kitchen this morning?”

“I didn’t almost burn it down!” George yelps. “It was a little bit of smoke. Like, not even that bad.”

“Well, the smoke alarm disagreed.”

“Well, the smoke alarm is stupid.”

“It’s an inanimate object!” Dream wheezes.

“It’s still stupid!”

They bicker back and forth like that for a few minutes while Dream washes the veggies. It’s reminiscent of how they used to be—before everything fell apart. They only settle down when Dream tugs George over to stand beside him. “Which hand did you burn?”

“Right.”

“Alright, good. That means you can help me cut the veggies.”

Dream rolls a bell pepper toward George and hands him a utility knife with a stern look. “Be careful with this, please.”

“I’m an adult, Dream. I know how to use a knife.”

“I don’t know, George. I’ve seen you cook,” Dream teases.

“You’re literally so annoying.”

“It’s part of my charm.”

Dream pulls an onion from the freezer and switches on the oven vent, ignoring the funny look George gives him. “Lowered temperatures reduce the onion’s enzyme’s abilities to produce the chemicals that make you cry. Add a fan on top of that and you’re tear-free.”

“Why do you know these things?”

“I spend 98% of my time desperately seeking temporary stimulation.”

“Quirky,” George mutters, stabbing aimlessly at the pepper.

Dream rolls his eyes, abandoning the onion. “You’re doing it wrong.”

“Oh, shut up. I’m doing fine.”

“No, you’re butchering the poor thing.”

“You told me to cut it!”

“Yeah, cut it, not make an unrecognisable mess of it.” Dream hesitates, flooded with domestic imagery not unlike that of the fanart he occasionally indulges himself in. He watches himself, a happier, less cautious version of himself, wrap his arms around George and guide his hands as he cuts the veggies. It’s so casual and yet so intimate and it’s all Dream wants and more. It’s so close and yet, he knows he can’t have it.

He shakes the thought from his head, taking the knife from George’s hand and demonstrating the most efficient way to cut it. “This way is easier and it makes the pieces more even.”

George watches him curiously before asking, “Seriously, why do you know all of this?”

“I helped my mom cook a lot when I was a kid.”

George smiles, small and thoughtless, as he takes the knife back and starts chopping, better than before but still unarguably messier than Dream had done.

They finish chopping the veggies—Well, Dream finishes chopping the onions, mushrooms, and scallions while George struggles valiantly against the pepper—and move on to the actual cooking.

Dream asks George to flip the first omelette, if only to watch his face glow with pride, this morning’s failures long forgotten in the face of a better memory.

He slides the first omelette out onto a plate, suppressing his excessive pride at such a mundane accomplishment. But Dream has grown to appreciate the mundane. “You did good,” he assures him. “It looks really good.”

“Thanks,” George mumbles, taking a seat at the island. He stares awkwardly at the plate as he often does when his is ready before Dream’s.

And, as he does every time this happens, Dream debates his options. He hates to give George “permission” to eat, but he knows George won’t start without it, and he doesn’t want his food going cold and gross. Patiently, Dream assures him, “You can eat, ya know. Mine’ll be ready in a minute.”

“Thank you,” George mutters, absently, a force of habit he’s hardly even aware of. He cuts into the omelette and takes a polite bite, humming his approval. “I think you might’ve been right. This might be the ‘best damn omelette I’ve ever had in my life.’”

Dream smiles proudly, sliding his own out of the pan and taking a seat next to George. “Well, it was all you, Gogs.”

They chat about a million small, pointless things before standing and washing their dishes and going about their days, feeling, for once, as though they’re not pretending when they say the world is not crumbling around them.

If this is the closest to Hallmark domesticity that Dream can get, then so be it. He'll take it.

Chapter End Notes

I really made y'all platonically simp for a guy named Chad, huh?

EN EE WAYS, hey, y'all. I know this chapter is super, super, super late. I made a quick announcement about it on my Tumblr and Twitter (shameless plug bb), but basically, I fell behind on schoolwork and I also had a bunch of AP exams. Also, I actually wrote two chapters during this time because I'm a dumbass and I changed my mind at the last minute on the order of some things. But the good news there is that the next chapter is actually already all written and should be out in a few days :))

Another reason this is so late—and this one's actually a fun reason—is that I opened commissions!! So, if any of you are interested in commissioning me (or just donating) (haha jk..... unless.....), go check my Tumblr for more details and feel free to message me with questions/inquiries through either Twitter or Tumblr.

Also, I know you all wanted movie night and I pinkie promise you are gonna get it. Like I said, I wrote the next chapter first, so that's where the movie night is. I'm so excited for it. It goes from "aww look how cute and sweet and fluffy they are, adorable little dumbasses" to "oh fuck oh shit no wait stop it" in like 2k words. Sorry in advance :)) (/hj)

Also also, this is probably a dumb question, but I'm genuinely wondering: do you guys think this story has any potential as a real book? Like, obviously there would be major editing and I would have to change the characters a lot, but the general storyline?? Or, more specifically, do you think I actually have potential as a writer? You don't have to answer if you're not comfortable saying, but feel free to be honest. I promise not to get my feelings hurt (/gen). I really like this story but I don't want to waste my time trying to turn it into a real book (after the fic is finished ofc) if it has no potential.

twitter.com/caseywond3r
caseywond3r.tumblr.com

Much love <33

so touch him and break me

Chapter Summary

Dream helps George out on a bad day. George tries to thank him in the only way he knows how.

Chapter Notes

Big thanks to Cassiopeia_56 for the idea on this chapter!! And you all of you who asked for movie night cuddles!!

tw: disassociation, nightmares, panic attacks, food issues, consent issues (not noncon or even really dubcon, though, I promise)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's a beautiful Saturday afternoon. The sun is shining, the birds are chirping. Or at least, they probably are, behind the window shades George keeps drawn.

Dream knocks on the door. "George?"

"Come in."

Dream peaks his head in. "It's time for lunch."

"I'm not hungry," George mumbles, kicking the blanket off a little too aggressively. The house is warm to begin with, and the blanket makes him sweat, but it does little to thaw that indescribable *inside* sort of cold.

"George, you already missed breakfast. I can't let you skip lunch, too."

"What does it matter?"

"Because you need to eat," Dream huffs. "I don't understand. You've been doing so well these past few weeks. What happened?"

"Nothing *happened*, Dream." George rolls his eyes, practically snarling. "That's the thing. It just gets like this, sometimes."

Dream gets that kicked puppy look of his. "I'm sorry."

George can hear the exhaustion in his voice. He pauses, taking a minute to collect himself. "No. No, *I'm* sorry. I shouldn't snap at you. I know you're just trying to help."

"It's okay."

"Please stop saying that," George groans. "Stop saying it's okay when I'm being an arse. You've

done everything you can to help me and I've fought you every step of the way. If anything, *you* should be the one pissed at *me*."

"I don't want to be pissed at you."

"Yeah. Well."

Dream sighs, taking a seat on the edge of George's bed. "You're doing the best you can, Gogs."

"If *this*," George gestures at the stale air around him, "is my best, then I'd hate to see my worst."

Dream drags his hands through his hair, tugging loosely at the strands. "I promised my mom I'd come by later to help her with some yard work. Do you wanna come?"

George considers it but shakes his head in favour of his warm bed.

"George, come on. You have to get up. You have to get out."

Still, George only shakes his head.

"Alright," Dream sighs. "You've forced my hand. If you come with me today, we can watch more of those stupid movies when we get home."

Now, this gives George pause.

He'd guilted Dream into watching Harry Potter with him after his first counselor's session a few months back, but they'd only gotten through the first three, before falling asleep on opposite ends of the couch. The next day, Dream had sworn never again to let George rope him into watching what he deemed to be "the most mindblowing juxtaposition of a gripping fantasy setting and painfully boring and stupid characters."

"Fine," George groans, swinging his legs reluctantly off the bed. "But only because I'm a good person, and I'm committed to my mission to enlighten you on the magic of the wizarding world."

George tries to stand, but Dream grabs his arm gently, pulling his attention back. "Thank you, Georgie."

George just sighs, standing and turning away to hide the growing blush tainting his face. "Yeah, whatever."

- - -

It's a nice house, Dream's mom's, but it's smaller than you would expect for the family of a millionaire. They don't want to move houses while June is still in school, but Dream swears he's going to buy his mom a house on the beach as soon as his sister graduates.

Dream's mom smiles at George from the front lawn. It should be welcoming, but it feels intimidating, somehow. It makes George want to stay in the car.

George had met Dream's family a few times. They're a pretty close-knit unit, so it was just about inevitable. He liked them well enough and vice versa. George's sweaty palms and twitching fingers had nothing to do with them, in particular, but rather the insecurity that creeps up on him the minute he leaves the house. An existential sort of dread looms over him and he just can't shake it.

Dream shoots him an anxious glance. "It'll just be a few hours. Two, maybe three, at the max."

George just nods, lost in the scene outside his window. Calloused fingers wrap around his own, calling his attention back toward Dream. “You’re right here,” he says.

It’s a little trick George picked up in his second therapy session. His therapist noticed that, while he always seemed a little spacey, George seemed to shut down completely whenever he mentioned his ex or his breakup or his reasons for moving here or a variety of other triggers that poor Chad was still learning to dance around. He showed him a few “grounding techniques,” ways to keep himself present in his body instead of disassociating entirely.

“I’m right here,” George repeats.

“You’re in a car. You’re in Florida. You’re outside of my mom’s house.”

“I’m in a car. I’m in Florida. I’m outside of your mom’s house.”

“You’re safe.”

“I’m safe.”

George flexes his free hand a few times, feeling a little more in control of his body than he did just minutes prior.

Dream bites at his cheek as he studies George with worry. He looks like he’s admitting defeat when he says, “We can go home if you want. I can just tell my mom that something came up and I’ll come by tomorrow, instead.”

“No,” George mumbles. “No. I need to just... Let’s give it a go, yeah?”

Dream smiles, a tremulous hope. In his best British accent, he parrots, “Let’s give it a go.”

“Oh, fuck off,” George laughs, pulling his hand away and opening his door, stepping out into the suffocating early-autumn air.

- - -

“George!” June runs out of the house, meeting George halfway up the driveway and hugging him tightly.

George ruffles her hair playfully. “Hey, Drista.”

“Hey, what am I?” Dream pouts. “Chopped liver?”

“George is cooler than you.”

Dream gasps dramatically. She hugs him anyway.

Dream’s mom tugs off her gloves, pushing away the hair plastered to her forehead. She hugs Dream first and then turns to George.

George smiles shyly. “Hi, Mrs. Morgan.”

“George, I don’t know how many times I have to tell you. You can call me Ann.”

George laughs awkwardly, knowing he’ll probably never be comfortable doing that. It’s so distinctly American and it makes him nervous. He figures he’ll have to start trying at some point. He doesn’t want to seem like some stuffy foreigner, after all.

Ann steps forward to give him a hug. It's another distinctly American sort of thing. At first, he just thought Dream's family was really clingy.

He hugs her back, feeling strangely at home in the embrace. He thinks that maybe this is one American tradition he can get behind.

George and June sit on the front porch making idle chit-chat while Dream and his mom mulch the flower beds. He tries to remember the last time he felt so comfortable with his own family. He struggles.

After an hour or so of weeding and mulching, Ann decides she can't bear the heat a second longer. She leads them all inside.

Pouring four glasses of sweet tea, she asks, "Have you boys had lunch yet? I can fix us some sandwiches."

"Oh, no, thank you, Mrs. Morgan. We had lunch before we came."

It's not a lie, per se, but Dream's glare makes it feel like it is. Dream had lunch. George had a granola bar. And even that took a considerable amount of bickering.

Dream's look is pleading, but also defiant. It says, *I don't want to pick a fight with you in front of my mother and sister, but I will if I have to.*

George sighs and nods minutely. He doesn't want to eat—the film of anxiety shrouding his vision is nauseating enough to begin with—but he doesn't want to cause a scene, either. He figures it's the least he can do for Dream after everything that's been done for him.

Dream smiles and cuts in, "Actually, Mom, we're starving. Sandwiches sound great."

"Good." Ann claps her hands together. "Let me see what we have here."

- - -

Dream eats his sandwich with overactive enthusiasm, stealing cautious glances at George as he nibbles anxiously at his own. George is only able to choke down half the sandwich, but Dream gives him a congratulatory smile, anyway. And when his mom turns her back to wash their dishes, Dream whispers to him, "You did good."

Three little words, but they hold an almost theistic admiration.

And God, does Dream admire him.

When Dream and his mom head back out front to finish up the yardwork, Dream sneaks near-constant glances at George. He's wearing a long-sleeve t-shirt to hide the fading scars on his wrists, but it's 98 degrees out. He has to be getting warm.

Dream looks between George and the hose in his hand. His mom gives him a look, a silent, *Don't you dare.*

"Oh, George," he calls.

The manhunt call. If there's anything to activate George's fight or flight.

Dream aims the hose at George and...

“Dream!” he squeals, jumping up and stumbling up the stairs, out of the line of fire. “What is *wrong* with you?”

“What can I say? You looked hot.”

Dream’s so busy wheezing at himself that he doesn’t notice George lock eyes with his mom until...

“What the f—”

Dream feels something wet and sticky dripping from his forehead. He turns around to find the perpetrator, only to be met with his mom holding an empty glass.

George laughs so hard he has to sit back down as his mom smirks at him. “Don’t mess with my favourite son.”

“He’s not even—That’s not even—” Dream rambles, indignant. “I can’t believe this. Betrayed by my own flesh and blood!”

June comes outside then, almost tripping over her own feet at the sight of Dream, long hair flattened against his head, dripping tea and pouting. She almost composes herself when she looks over and sees George dripping wet, as well, and loses it all over again. Between giggles, she asks, “What happened to you two?”

“He was being mean to George,” their mom supplies.

“Oh, no,” June gasps. “No one’s mean to Gogy and gets away with it.”

“Clearly not,” Dream mumbles, pushing the wet hair back from his forehead.

Though the Florida heat would almost certainly be enough to dry George’s clothes within the hour, June refuses to pass up a single opportunity to make her brother’s life a living hell. Winking dramatically at Dream, she says, “Come on, George. Clay has some clothes in his old room. We can get you something dry to wear.”

- - -

An hour later, the garden has been watered and goodbyes have been said. George and Dream pile into the car and head home, Dream trying his hardest not to think too much about George in his hoodie. He’d only seen that once before, and George had been too sick for the sight to bring him any pleasure. Now, though...

Dream slams on the breaks, not ten feet from a red light. As he and George lurch forward in their seats, he can almost see the headline:

Popular Minecraft streamers DreamWasTaken and GeorgeNotFound die in grizzly car accident after Dream is too distracted being gay for a man who has absolutely zero interest in him to pay any amount of attention to the road. Stay straight, kids! o7

“Dream! Watch where you’re going!”

“Yeah, no, yeah, sorry. I zoned out for a second.”

“You can’t just ‘zone out’ while you’re driving, idiot.”

“Yeah, I know. Sorry.” Dream clears his throat, shaking his head a bit. “So, Harry Potter when we

get home?” George hums his approval. “Wanna order a pizza or something?”

George just sighs, leaning his head up against the window. Dream really needs to get off TikTok because, in his head, he hears, *All around me are familiar faces...*

“You suck,” George mumbles.

Dream giggles like a middle-schooler and says, “Only for you, Georgie.”

- - -

George snuggles up on one end of the couch, plate in hand. They settled on one piece of cheese pizza. It isn’t quite what he should be having, considering how little he’s eaten today, but it’s doable. It’s work that he’s willing to put in, and that’s what matters today.

Dream settles on the opposite end of the couch, pressing play on the movie.

By the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, however, George feels tired. Not physically, more of a bone-deep sort of exhaustion. He grabs a blanket from the back of the couch and snuggles into it, but it doesn’t feel as warm as it should.

He finds himself pining for John, something he hasn’t done in weeks. Missing him? Sure. It’s easy enough to miss someone when you think they’re all you’ll ever have. But not pining for him. Not wanting him.

He thinks maybe he just misses the warmth of having another body pressed against his own.

Dream looks over at George, like two can pine for different loves, and drapes his arm across the back of the couch. An open invitation that a stronger man, a smarter man, might know is bound only to end in arson. And George—because, for all his strength, he’s never been smart—accepts.

They fall asleep on the couch, somewhere in the middle of a magical battle that neither of them cares an ounce about when George is curled into the solid warmth of Dream’s chest and he can hear his heart pounding through the soft material of his t-shirt.

- - -

Dream wakes up to an elbow in his ribs. His eyes fly open, scanning the room for the culprit before finally landing on the sweat-soaked boy curled into his chest.

George thrashes in his sleep, breathless whimpers falling from his lips. He’d told Dream he still had nightmares sometimes, but Dream hadn’t seen them firsthand in so long that, for a moment, he just sits there, feeling utterly blindsided by the pain so evident on his friend’s face.

Gently, Dream shakes him awake.

George’s eyes fly open, darting around the room like he expects someone to step forward from the shadows. His breaths come in shallow, unsteady heaves.

It takes him a minute to process where he is, but when he finally does, it only seems to break him further. He turns in Dream’s arms, climbing into his lap and pressing his face into his chest, like a child afraid of a thunderstorm.

And he cries. God, does he cry. He sobs in a way he hasn’t allowed himself since he left the hospital, since he stopped waking up to a friend at his bedside.

“You’re okay,” Dream whispers. “You’re alright. I’m right here. Nobody can hurt you anymore, Gogs.”

They lay there until George’s shaking has stopped and his tears have soaked all the way through Dream’s sweatshirt and deep into his skin and Dream is still whispering, “You’re okay. You’re okay,” like he can will it to be true.

George pulls away from his chest, looking up into Dream’s eyes, but not quite seeing him. He looks like he’s four thousand miles away, again.

His voice is raw when he whispers, “I’m sorry.”

“You don’t have anything to be sorry for.”

“You’ve been so good to me. You do so much to help me.”

“I do what I can. I wish I could do more.”

George hesitates, hand drifting up to drag his fingertips along Dream’s neck. Dream shivers at the touch.

And then, the most painful, beautiful, sickening thing happens.

Dream learns the feeling of his love’s lips against his own.

It’s only a second, it’s only a breath stolen where Dream can’t even think, can’t form a single goddamn thought, and he feels his own lips twitch with the desire to kiss him back.

He refrains.

Even drunk on George’s touch, Dream knows better. George isn’t really kissing *him*.

Dream pulls himself together just enough to push George away. Not far, just enough so he can breathe again, so he can think of all the things he wants to say.

“Oh, Gogs,” Dream sighs, letting his hand fall from George’s chest. “Why’d you have to go and do that?”

Chapter End Notes

hahahahaha uhhh hey guys.....

Absolutely unrelated note, but: I saw an ant carrying a crumb like three times its body size while I was having an Executive Dysfunction Moment™ trying to write this. It didn’t like, *inspire me to trudge onward* or whatever, like it would in some self-help book lol but it was pretty neat and gave me an excuse to get distracted for an hour reading the Wikipedia for ants.

Comments give me happy chemicals <33

P.S. big thanks to all of you who hyped me up last chapter. y'all are so sweet. thank you for believing in me <33

if you didn't go and fall in love

Chapter Summary

George and Dream sort their feelings.

Chapter Notes

tw: discussions of consent issues, suicidal ideation (satirically, not seriously)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The look of confusion and exhaustion playing at George's face only smothers any remaining ember of hope Dream may have had that George really wanted *him*.

"I'm sorry...? I thought... I thought that was what you wanted from me."

Dream laughs to himself, a bitter, broken thing, and says, "Yeah. That's the problem, isn't it?"

George slides out of his lap, allowing Dream to stand and pace the room, tugging his fingers through his hair to distract himself from the tears crawling up his oesophagus.

"I don't understand," George mumbles, eyes brimming with tears that Dream wants nothing more than to brush away. "Did I do something wrong? Is that not what you wanted?"

"Of course it's what I—" Dream cuts himself off before he can say anything too pathetic. "I need a minute. I need a few minutes. I'm not mad. I will come back. But I just... I need a minute."

And he walks out, locking the door behind him.

- - -

George has never been good at introspection. He doesn't know what he's feeling half the time, and he sure as fuck doesn't know why he's feeling it. It's easier that way, he figures.

So, he didn't question it when he realised he was about to kiss Dream. And maybe that was the problem. He didn't decide to kiss him. He just realised all of a sudden that he was doing it.

When he tries to introspect, when he tries to ask himself *why* he did what he did, he finds two answers:

To begin with, he acted on instinct. He felt guilty for waking Dream up, the latest in a long list of burdens George has placed on him. He felt like he owed Dream for helping him out, for taking him in. He knew what had been expected of him before. He thought that maybe Dream expected that, too, even if he was too much of a gentleman to ever admit it. Who would be so kind, so gentle to someone who could give them nothing in return? No one George had ever met.

And yet.

And yet.

Once he had realised. Once his body had started moving on its own accord. Once he saw his hand flutter up to Dream's face and felt his stubble beneath his palm. Once he was moving forward and pressing his lips to Dream's.

It wasn't just guilt. It wasn't just debt.

It was something deeper, an emotion he couldn't name.

And it *ached*. It ached like the first breath of air after eight months of drowning. The burn in his lungs as he realises, for the first time, that he was dying, and now he's not.

And now, none of it matters. Because, somehow, in doing the one thing he thought would make Dream happy, he damaged everything. He fears, irreparably.

He retreats to his bedroom, hoping that, maybe if he's not there to fuck everything up again, Dream will come back home.

- - -

Soft kisses trail across the bridge of Karl's nose. It would be cute if it didn't wake him up.

Karl whines, pressing his face into Sappap's shoulder to hide from the onslaught of affection.

"Karl," Sap hums. "Come on, babe. My arm's asleep."

Reluctantly, Karl pulls away from his *fiancé*—hell, if he'd ever get tired of saying that—and checks his phone while Sappap goes to get ready for bed.

2:14A.M.

3 Missed Calls From George

Karl returns the call, baseless anxiety gnawing at his stomach. Random calls aren't entirely uncommon in their friend group, so Karl can't quite explain why he feels like something terrible is about to happen, or like maybe it already has.

When the line picks up, Karl clears his throat and says, "Hey, what's up?"

Silence, broken only by shaky, unstable breaths.

"George? Is everything alright?"

"I fucked up."

"What happened?" Karl pushes himself to sit up straighter on the couch, all traces of sleep gone from his body and mind.

The line is silent a moment, and maybe the silence is just as worthless as any words George could conjure in this moment. Finally, with all the confidence of a lost child, "I kissed him."

"You..."

"I kissed Dream."

Karl struggles to find a response, flipping through a million things he wants to say, congratulations he wants to give, or condolences, maybe, for the mourning in George's voice. He settles for, "You sound upset."

"He didn't kiss me back, Karl."

Sapnap pops his head back in. "You coming to bed?"

Karl waves him off, focusing his attention back on George. "Why not?"

"I don't know. I don't fucking know. I thought... I thought he loved me. I thought it would make him happy. But he looked so... hurt. He just kept asking me why. And I don't know why."

Sap walks back around the couch, plopping down beside his fiancé. He mouths, *Who?*

In reply, *George.*

Sap points at the phone, a request. "Hey George, Sap is here with me. Is it alright if I put you on speakerphone?"

"No," George snaps. "No, no, no. I shouldn't even be talking to you about this. Dream is already mad at me and I don't want him to think I'm just talking to everybody and, besides, Sapnap is Dream's best friend. I'm sure if Dream's mad at me, Sap will be, too, and he should be. I deserve it. And besides *that*, I don't want to take away Dream's person. He needs someone to talk to, too."

"Alright, first of all, Dream is a grown man. If he wants to talk to Sap, he will, and he hasn't. And don't you dare say you shouldn't have called me. I'm here for you whenever you need a friend, okay? I don't care how personal it is. I'm here for you, always." Karl meets Sapnap's worried gaze, watching as he realises something is seriously wrong here. "Now, if you feel more comfortable just talking to me, that's okay, but Sap is still here and he's worried about you. Is it okay if I put you on speaker?"

George pauses, then concedes. "Alright."

Karl puts him on speakerphone and Sap says, "Hey, Gogs. What's up?"

"Can I tell him?" Karl asks.

"I guess so."

"Tell me what?"

"He kissed Dream."

Sapnap chokes on air, almost laughing. "Good for you, Gogs."

Sapnap's amusement is short-lived, however, when Karl continues, "He didn't kiss him back."

"I'm sorry, what?"

George groans something pitiful. "I fucked up."

"Wait, sorry, go back. You kissed Dream and he didn't kiss you back? Dude's had a crush on you since he was, like, sixteen. Are you sure he wasn't just in shock?"

"I'm sure, Sap. He pushed me away."

"Why?"

Karl cuts in. "Start from the beginning."

"There isn't much to tell. We fell asleep on the couch watching a movie. I woke up a few hours later from a nightmare, had a panic attack. He helped me calm down. And then, next thing I knew, I was kissing him. And he wasn't kissing me back. And then he pushed me away a little and we talked for a minute, but he just kept asking me why I did it and I didn't have an answer for him. And then, he just left. I mean, he didn't just leave. He told me he needed space. He said he'd be back and he said he wasn't mad, but I don't even know what happened. I don't even know why he's so upset. I thought it would make him happy."

"Maybe he just wanted to make sure you were okay," Karl suggests, cheerfully. "You were obviously emotionally vulnerable. Maybe he was just checking that you were really okay with what was happening."

"I don't understand," George mumbles. "I kissed *him*. Shouldn't that be enough?"

"Yeah, but you were so upset. Maybe he was worried you were just looking for comfort."

"If I wanted comfort, I wouldn't have kissed him.."

"What do you mean?" Sap asks.

"I mean... I mean, I don't think I kissed him for *me*. I just wanted him to be happy, ya know? I just wanted to make him feel good. After everything he's done for me, I think I owe him that much."

Sap's heart breaks—not only for George, but for Dream, too. He looks over at Karl to see if he's thinking the same, but he just looks lost.

"George," he sighs. "Dream doesn't want to just kiss you."

"I know," George mumbles, sounding sick with himself. "Do you think that's why he was mad? It wasn't enough?"

"What? Oh my—Jesus fucking—No. No. God, no. Jesus Christ, man. No. That's not what I meant."

"What?"

"I wasn't talking about sex, George. I think that's the last thing on his mind lately."

"Then what were you talking about?"

"He's in love with you, George. He doesn't just want to kiss you once because you're sad and scared. That would kill him. To have you for just a minute, and to know that it was only because you felt like you owed him something. To know that you thought he was just as terrible as John, that he only cared about you for what you could give to him."

"That's not—" George sputters for a response. "That's not what I think of him."

"But that's what he thinks you think of him after tonight." Sap pauses, like he knows he'll regret asking this. "Was that the only reason you kissed him? Because you felt like you owed him?"

George lets the silence fill the space between phone lines. "I don't know, Sap. I wish I knew, but I don't."

Karl pipes up again, trying to push away the wildly-out-of-his-depth feeling creeping up on him. "George?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you remember that first night we came to stay with you and Dream? You were pretty out of it, but do you remember?"

"Yeah, most of it."

"Do you remember what you were watching?"

George laughs, raspy and broken. "Unfortunately."

"It's pretty bad, isn't it?" Karl teases.

"Yeah. Yeah, it's pretty bad. Definitely enlightened me on the pros of heterophobia."

"Do you remember what you said to me that night? About why you were so upset?"

George lets the quiet soak into their bones again, almost reverent. "Yeah. I remember."

"Do you remember what I told you?"

"Are you going somewhere with this or are you just a fan of 20 Questions?"

"I told you that someday, someone was gonna love you with so much passion that you'll know they'd walk through fire to keep you from feeling pain. But you know as well as I do that that was sort of a lie. It's not someday, it's not someone. It's him. He loves you with more passion than anyone I've ever seen before. He would die for you. And that doesn't mean you have to love him back—not at all—but, George... there's a reason you were watching that god awful show."

George sighs into the phone, exhausted, drained. "He's perfect, ya know? He's everything I could ever want and he's in love with me. And I think, in a different life, I could have loved him, too."

"And in this life?"

"I don't know."

"You should tell him that."

"That I have no fucking clue how I feel about him?"

"That he makes you feel things you can't describe."

Karl curls into his fiancée's chest, wondering vaguely how he could live without this sort of love.

More reassuring words are exchanged before the call ends. Karl falls asleep in Sapnap's embrace, and Sapnap lets his arm fall back to sleep, as well. *It's worth it*, he thinks, *to know he's mine*.

- - -

Dream is sitting in his car, in his driveway, staring at his front door, and wanting, more than anything, to walk back inside and lie back down on the couch with George folded carefully into his arms, to fall back to sleep and wake back up in the warmth of the sun streaming in through the windows. But he can't.

He's witnessed so much worse in this past year, the sort of things that haunt the darkest corners of your mind, lying in wait until you lay your head down at night. And yet, somehow, he can't remember anything that's hurt this badly.

He slams his fists against the steering wheel, feeling all the more like a child throwing a temper tantrum because he didn't get his way. He feels indescribably pathetic. He feels sick to his stomach.

His brain fights a bloody battle against itself, trying to decide whether he needs to forget the feeling of George's lips against his own, or to live in that feeling forever.

George kissed him. And he didn't mean it. And now, Dream has to live with the knowledge that George thinks so little of him that he would give over his body in exchange for some basic human kindness.

He thinks maybe the reason he's sitting in his driveway right now is that he doesn't trust himself not to drive straight off the I-4.

What can he say? He's a Leo.

4:27 A.M.

>sapnap< hey

news travels fast, huh >dream<

>sapnap< yeah, I guess you could say that.

>sapnap< look, man, I'm not trying to get involved in your shit, alright? I know how hard all of this has been on you.

>sapnap< but just remember what I told you before. don't push him away in some last ditch attempt to protect yourself.

>sapnap< besides, something tells me you might not need protecting this time

he doesn't love me, sap. he told me himself at the start of all of this. >dream<

>sapnap< does he have to love you?

>sapnap< everything is always so black and white for you, clay, but honestly? you're missing out on so many beautiful things in the grey.

wow, you get engaged and suddenly you're lord byron >dream<

>sapnap< more like lord BIron

>sapnap< lol

>sapnap< bad timing?

you're a terrible person >dream<

>sapnap< I know

>sapnap< you have to talk to him

I know >dream<

>sapnap< ily, dumbass

yeah whatever >dream<

>sapnap< *gasp*

DO NOT RP CHAT ME RN I AM VULNERABLE >dream<

>sapnap< *kisses you sadly*

i actually hate you. >dream<

>sapnap< good. now go talk to george or it's gonna be *kisses you threateningly*

IM GOING IM GOING IM GOING IM GOING IM GOING >dream<

>sapnap< *pats you on the head* good boy

- - -

Around five in the morning, George gives up on sleep, getting up to put on the kettle. Dream comes through the front door a minute later.

Dream clears his throat, looking a little surprised to see George up this early. "Hey."

"Hey."

He hangs his keys up on the hook by the door, stalling for a minute like he can't quite bring himself to meet his roommate's eye. He's still boring holes into his shoes when he says, "I'm really sorry about last night."

George pours a cup of hot water for himself, relying on the heat of the mug to ground him. "What do you have to be sorry for?"

“Well,” Dream starts. “Leaving, for one. I know that makes you anxious and I tried to explain as best I could, but I just needed some space, ya know? I just needed to think a little.”

George abandons his tea and treads closer to Dream. “What were you thinking about?”

He drags a hand through his hair and sighs. “You. I’m always thinking about you.”

“I called Karl last night.”

“I know. Sap texted me.”

“I’m sorry. I know you like your privacy, but I just needed someone to talk to.”

“You don’t have to be sorry,” Dream assures him. “They’re like our family, Gogs. You can tell them anything, no matter how personal, and I’d never be mad at you.”

George takes another cautious step toward Dream. “I needed someone to help me answer your question.”

“My question?”

“Why I did it.”

“Oh,” Dream breathes. It’s so faint, it could be his last word, the anaesthesia wearing off from the surgery that kills him. “Did you get your answer?”

“No.”

“Oh.”

George steps closer again, almost close enough to touch, almost close enough to kiss, almost close enough to send Dream into a spiral of self-hatred and despair. “I think I like you.”

Dream freezes, caught somewhere between desperation and abject horror. Breathlessly, “Don’t.”

“Why?”

“Because you can’t just *say that*—” He swallows down the pathetic hope so evident in his tone and aims for disinterest. He misses by a mile when his voice breaks around the words, “You can’t just say those things if you don’t mean them.”

George reaches out, slow and scared. He lets his fingers brush against their calloused counterparts as he lets the confession fall from his mouth. “I mean them, Dream.”

They stand there for too long, intertwining their fingers and staring into each other’s eyes, scanning desperately for a lie, or maybe for pity. They find nothing but vulnerability.

Dream is the first to break the moment, maybe too afraid to let himself soak in that feeling he’s only once allowed himself to admire. *The feeling of loving, of being loved.*

“What does this mean?”

“I don’t know,” George sighs. “I think... I think I just need time. Can we just... take things slow? One day at a time?”

Dream squeezes the pale hand in his when he says, “For you, George? I’d live in this moment

forever.”

George takes a deep breath, slow and calculated. Reminds himself that he is safe. That he is loved. He takes a moment to try to understand what it is that he really wants.

And then, and only then, does he take a step forward, letting go of Dream’s hand in favour of his chest, wrapping his arms tightly around strong and steady muscle, pressing his face into the soft cotton of his shirt, and breathing in the scent of safety, of *home*.

Hesitantly, Dream brings his arms up around George’s shoulders, holding him tight. Voice fragile, afraid, he asks, “Is this okay?”

“This is perfect,” George mumbles, muffled, yet clearer than he’s felt in months. “This is right.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm running out of chapters lol I made it 38 chapters so I could keep with the lyric thing for chapter titles but I think I just screwed myself over because I still have a lot more that I want to get through (hence why the past ten or so chapters have been way longer than usual). Oh well, that's what you get for not starting an outline until you're, like, 25 chapters in, ig.

Anyways, this is off-topic, but I know there's been a lot of body shaming (mostly from antis) clogging up the mcyt tags lately and I know, personally, it took a huge toll on my mental health. so, I just wanted to take this chance to remind you:

You are beautiful. Your body is beautiful. And even if you don't think it's beautiful, it's keeping you alive. It's working so hard to keep you alive so you can do amazing things. And it needs food to do that. So please be kind to your body and give it the nutrition it needs to keep doing its job, keeping you safe and healthy so you can keep kicking ass. Much love <33

DMs always open at:

twitter.com/caseywond3r (mostly memes and shit)

caseywond3r.tumblr.com (mostly writing updates)

but you've lost all your past

Chapter Summary

Dream takes George somewhere special.

Chapter Notes

Big thanks to @KaitHatesKitKats for the idea for this chapter <33

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It's been about a month since that—Confession? Discussion? Realization? Whatever you want to call it—and things have been going well since. Nothing much has changed. George is more than happy keeping things as they are and Dream is happy just to see George happy.

Though, to be perfectly fair, their relationship was never exactly the embodiment of platonic affection. Maybe they're just finally willing to acknowledge that.

The only major change has been their "sorta dates." Maybe that's the best part about dating your best friend. You don't have to label things. You both know how the other feels.

Usually, these almost-dates are casual, a nice dinner or a late-night movie, and they both love the simplicity of it, but Dream has always been a bit on the eccentric side, and it's slowly killing him that he can't treat George the way he deserves to be treated.

So, very politely, he tells him, "Tomorrow at noon, we are going to an undisclosed location. Ask no questions. This is a kidnapping."

George rolls his eyes fondly and sets his alarm for ten.

- - -

"Can you please just tell me where you're taking me?"

"Absolutely not."

"Why not?"

"Because you'll know when we get there."

"Or I could just know *now*."

Just then, a Ferris wheel comes into view.

"Ta-Da," Dream hums, pointing toward the wheel.

George feels an odd sort of pang in his chest. It's not anxiety, not even sadness, really. He's not sure

how to describe it. Maybe longing.

He tries to laugh it off, to keep Dream from seeing whatever it is that's ripping at his veins. "A fair? A little on the childish side, don't you think?"

"It's not a fair, idiot. It's an amusement park." He pulls into a parking lot, packed full, and starts looking for a spot. "I thought maybe you missed home a little so I started looking for some vaguely England-y stuff, and I remembered you talking about Brighton Pier and how much you loved it. This place—ICON Park—It's a lot like it, I think. There's a giant arcade and—and a ferris wheel and—and I thought you might like it."

He sounds so hopeful, his smile feels so tentative, that George just can't help but indulge him. "I do like it. It was very thoughtful of you to look for this."

Dream's anxious simper melts into unrestrained joy. "Let's go, then."

George forces his smile to strengthen, stabilise. "Let's go."

- - -

"You're such a cheater!"

"How am I a cheater? Literally, how did I cheat?"

"You literally screamed 'Please don't put it in my hole!' Everyone was looking at us! How am I supposed to focus after that?"

"It's called tactical distraction!"

The sign above the air hockey table flickers, changing the scoreboard from 7:6 back to 0:0.

They decide to grab lunch at the Sugar Factory, where Dream gets their rainbow sliders because, "*Sometimes, all I think about is you...*"

George gets chicken tenders and something called the Sugar Daddy Milkshake, though only after asking, "You're paying for lunch, right, babe?" Dream is so caught up in the pet name that he doesn't even notice the near-thirty dollar price. It doesn't matter. Because when George looks up at him with a little milk mustache and smiles, Dream knows he would drape George in golden threads and diamond pendants if it made him smile like that more often.

- - -

"This has been a really, really wonderful day, Dream."

"Well, it's not over yet."

"I don't think our friendship could handle any more arcade games," George giggles.

"No more arcade games," Dream swears, taking George's hand and dragging him across the lot until they're standing at the foot of the Ferris wheel.

It takes George a minute to process. He'd been so caught up trying to be present in this moment here with Dream, that he'd almost forgotten the reason he was so spacey in the first place.

"No, thank you," George concludes, turning away from the wheel just to be pulled back in.

"Dream, you're literally afraid of heights. Why on Earth would you want to go on a Ferris wheel?"

"Ferris wheels aren't scary. They're romantic."

Dream reaches out for his hand, unafraid. George hates himself for flinching away.

"I'm really tired," he lies. "I'd kind of rather just go home."

The smile falls from Dream's face and he sounds all too small when he asks, "Did I do something wrong?"

"No. No," George assures him. "You didn't do anything wrong."

"George. You promised that you would start being honest with me."

George pauses, wringing his hands almost painfully. Dream curls his own hands into fists just to refrain from reaching out.

"On the day you came to England, um, John, he—He took me to Brighton Pier. It's my last good memory with him."

Dream swallows hard. "I didn't know."

"I know."

The silence returns, ringing and violent, and George isn't sure if he should chase it out again. His words still feel empty, unimportant. He's working on it.

Finally, George says, "It wasn't all bad, you know. I wouldn't have stayed for so long if it were. There were moments—good moments, sweet moments—where he really made me believe..."

"Do you miss him?" The words sound bitter, and Dream makes a face like they taste just as acerbic.

George purses his lips, humming softly. "I think so. I think I probably always will, in a way."

"Is that why you don't want to be here with me anymore?"

"I do want to be here with you. This was so sweet of you to look for and set up. And I meant it when I said I was having a good time? It's just... It's a lot, you know? It's a lot all at once and I just..."

"Can you tell me about it?"

That's somehow the last thing he expected to hear. After everything Dream has done for him, to confess his love for a man so despised... George had expected anger, frustration, heartbreak. He didn't expect sympathy. And he sure as hell didn't expect empathy.

But if Dream was willing to listen, who was George to seal himself away?

"He was nice sometimes," George starts, hesitantly. "Thoughtful. He would buy me things—clothes, jewelry, concert tickets. It was usually after fights. He hated to apologise, he hated to be wrong. So he bought me things. And that was his way of showing he still loved me.

"After that fight, the really bad one, he wanted to apologise, so he took me to Brighton. It's not that far from where we lived, but it's just kind of expensive and I hadn't been in years. We went to the arcade and played games. He won most of the time. I think I might have let him. And then we went down to the beach and we went in the water. And we laughed, and he kissed me. And we were

going to go on the Ferris wheel. We were going to go right at sunset, like we were in some stupid, cheesy romcom.

"But the water was too cold and... Well, I was so underweight. I started to get hypothermic, I think. I couldn't stop shaking and it was getting hard to move. We just laughed about it. He said... He said it was a good thing he was there to take care of me when I was just a little too fragile for the world.

"I didn't much want to be there anymore, anyway. My face was all fucked up and we kept getting looks from strangers. I hated feeling exposed like that. Like they all knew exactly what was going on. Like they could see me falling apart.

"So I never got my Ferris wheel ride. And I never got my cheesy romcom moment. And now I'm with you, and I know you want to give me everything in the world, but it hurts sometimes because I know he wanted to give me the world, too. And I hate myself for leaving before he could. I know it's stupid, I know he would never really change. But my heart or my brain or whatever the fuck it is that's making it hard for me to breathe today apparently doesn't understand that."

Dream just stands there, soaking in the confession, looking lost and afraid, eyes darting between their shadows. "I didn't know any of that."

"I know."

"I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"I don't know."

"Hey, that's not fair," George whines. "If I have to be honest, so do you."

Dream holds his gaze for a long while, eyes stained with guilt and longing. He forces a deep breath and let's the words fall from his tongue, dipped in poison, but never venom. "Sometimes, I feel like, if I just loved you more or loved you better or loved you stronger, maybe you wouldn't feel that way. Maybe you wouldn't miss him. And I know that's not how it works. I know it's trauma and it's embedded within you and I don't blame you for it at all. I just... I feel like... I must be doing something wrong or you would be better by now."

George wants to say something, wants to assure him that there's nothing more that he could do to fix him. But he knows that Dream knows that. So, he settles for taking a steady breath and a step closer, and reaching out. A pale hand against a tanned shoulder. A promise. An attempt.

"I'm right here," George whispers.

Dream meets his eye, hopeful. "You're right here."

George steps a little closer, allowing the hand on Dream's shoulder to slide up and over, pulling him in, pulling him down. His other arm wraps hesitantly around his waist. Dream stays stock-still, heart thrumming where George presses his face into the crook of his neck. Against Dream's pulse point, he promises, "We're here."

Dream wraps his arms around his lover, loose and cautious, pressing his lips to George's hair when he says, "We're here."

They stand there for an infinity, crowd weaving around them, world unending and insistent. And

when George finally pulls back, he presses a kiss to Dream's cheek, soft and slow and *right*.

"I love you," Dream whispers.

George smiles, interlacing their fingers and pulling him over to the Ferris wheel. They're just in time to catch the sunset.

Chapter End Notes

I'm gonna be honest here, I didn't really edit this chapter. I had a lot of trouble writing this because it kept triggering my internalised arophobia, so I just wanted to get it out. Feel free to lmk if there are any spelling/grammar mistakes /gen

On a much more lighthearted note: I may or may not have neglected to do my research when I first wrote about Brighton. Apparently they dismantled the Brighton Wheel in, like, 2016. This bothers me so much more than it should. So, I'm waving my little author wand again and saying that, a few years in the future, they rebuilt Brighton Wheel just so George could have his Moment™. The world revolves around GeorgeNotFound, as it should.

Speaking of being a few years in the future, I've been struggling to keep up with my timeline here because I never explicitly give dates, just relations between events but, in my head, this story takes starts off in mid-2022 (pretty much just because I didn't want to deal with COVID lol). Anyways, I actually graphed it all out so I could keep track better. If you're at all interested in that, it's right [here](#).

Make sure to drink some water and take your meds if you need to. Try to eat something if you're hungry or haven't eaten today. I love you so much and I'm so proud of you <33

P.S. thank you all so, so, so much for 40k hits!! you all mean the world to me and I adore each and every one of you <333333

I've seen our café, I've clocked our plans

Chapter Summary

George decides it's time to start streaming again. Both he and Dream are nervous, but they find a way to make it fun.

Chapter Notes

tw: mild homophobia (assumptions of sexuality), mentions of sexual coercion

cw: sexual tension (no sexual content though)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George ✓ @GeorgeNotFound • 6h

stream tomorrow at 4PM PT / 7PM ET / 11PM GMT. minecraft but two people control one player.....irl

- - -

George is nervous. Of course he is. He's been in a few of his friends' streams, even uploaded a YouTube video a few weeks back, but this will be his first stream on his own channel. He has every right to be a little nervous.

Dream, on the other hand, looks like a Karen about to send her kid to preschool for the first time.

"Are you sure you're ready for this?" Dream asks for the millionth time. "No one would blame you for calling it off. We all know the chats can get a little bit out of line and they don't always—"

"Dream. I want to do this."

"Okay, okay, I get that, but I still think that, if you're going to do this, you should at least turn off interactions. Emote-only for chat, donos turned off. You know how they can get. I mean, you've seen how they react whenever you're in any of our streams. I've had my donos turned off for months now. They always mean well, but it can get really overwhelming and I just don't think that it's a good idea—"

"Dream," George huffs, flushed from the effort of restraint. "You're doing it again."

Dream winces, running a hand through his hair. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to act like you can't handle yourself. I know you can. I just worry too much."

"It's okay." George takes Dream's hand in his own and squeezes once before turning back to his set-up. "I'll start out with chat on sub-only and turn off text-to-speech. If people are being overly invasive or making me uncomfortable, I'll go to emote-only and turn donos off. Does that sound like a good deal?"

“Yeah. Yeah, that sounds alright.”

“Alright.”

George gets his settings in order, double, triple checking them just to waste some time. At 7:05, he figures he can't really stall anymore. He presses “Start Stream” and watches the viewers pour in.

He finds himself fading, falling away from himself and into somebody else, somebody better suited for an audience of this magnitude. They all have their streamer personas, they all have the mask they put on to keep people interested. George's just happens to be a little more comprehensive than most. And sometimes he forgets to take it off afterwards. But that can be dealt with later. For now,

“Hi guys! Hey, hi, oh my gosh, it's been forever! How do I even stream? I missed you guys!”

- - -

Dream tries his best not to feed into the DNFers lately. He has ever since John came into the picture. He'd already been accused of queerbaiting enough and he knew it wouldn't get any better now that George was actually openly gay. Most of the fans had quit it, too, both out of respect for their identities and because, while moving four thousand miles away should have been a pretty good hint, George never formally clarified that he had broken up with John, and no one wants to invade on a happy couple with some dumb joking ship.

However, now, with George sitting a hairsbreadth away, controlling the mouse while Dream mans the keyboard, he's finding it pretty damn hard to focus, and he's pretty sure chat is starting to pick up on it. It's the first time in months that he's seen more than a few stray messages in chat reading, “DNF?????”

“Dream! There's a creeper! What the he—What are you doing? Run, you idiot!”

Dream chokes on air, wheezing as he realises that he's been idle long enough for the creeper to explode, leaving them on three hearts.

“What is wrong with you?” George demands.

“Okay, no, you were distracting me, okay?”

“How was I distracting you? I was literally just mining!”

“Yeah, but—No, okay, shut up.”

“No, no, how was I distracting you, Dream?”

It's the kind of question that sounds innocent enough when you can't see the face behind it—the knowing smirk, the teasing gaze.

“You know how,” Dream mumbles.

“What was that, Dream?” George allows his right hand to wander toward Dream's own, feeling his muscles twitch under the touch.

With a little more confidence, or maybe just less patience, Dream growls, “You *know* how.”

“Maybe you should focus on the game,” George giggles. He leans away from the mic, tilting his head up until his lips brush against Dream's ear, whispering so the audience can't hear, “After all,

only winners get rewards."

Dream stumbles over his words, completely forgetting about the game before him until a zombie knocks them down two two and a half hearts. "I—You—Okay, no. Shut up. Chat—No—Chat, he's being—George is being—Okay, no, he's being ina—inappropriate."

"What?" George bats his eyes innocently, like chat can see him. "What did I say?"

"I'm not—No, I'm not gonna say it—What's—Oh my god, you're so stupid."

George shrugs noncommittally and returns to the game, but not before sending one last wink in Dream's direction.

Dream says nothing more about it, trying his best not to let his wandering thoughts impact his gameplay.

He almost thinks that chat might have let it slip. Two minutes, zero donos about their odd behaviour. Three minutes later, he finds out it's just the backlog as dono after dono starts rolling in.

BUDDYWASTAKEN donated £3.60

dee en eff ?

YOUDIDNTSPINTHEFIRE donated £5

back on their bullshit. can't say we didn't miss it

VGORVPHOBIC donated £10

uhh,,, dream,,,,, do you have something to tell us????

Dream laughs awkwardly and nudges George. He'd prefaced the stream by letting everyone know that he might not be paying much attention to donos, since he'd be focusing on the game. In reality, he just really didn't want to read through every sentimental message or plea for him to start streaming more regularly. So he hadn't even noticed the DNF donos until Dream pointed them out.

Dream mouths, *Turn off?*

George just shakes his head. Honestly, he doesn't really mind the shipping comments. He's used to them. They feel nostalgic, in a way. They remind him of *before*. Before John, before coming out. When everything was unlabelled, archaia floating around in the boiling ocean, novel and foreign, but so full of life.

Dream just nods, turning back to the screen and trying his best to suppress a smile. It doesn't work. George smiles openly, breaking down any guard Dream had tried to build up. He doesn't want George to feel pressured to tell their fans what's going on between the two of them; He's comfortable and confident in their relationship—whatever that may be. But it does feel surprisingly good that George isn't outright denying it. He didn't realise how much he'd missed all the stupid jokes and fanart and whatever else.

George presses a chaste kiss to Dream's shoulder, lips flush against his cotton tee, and Dream jerks their character to the left. A few minutes later, right as Dream jumps off a cliff so George can pull an MLG, Dream tells him to, "Be careful, babe," causing him to miss it entirely.

It becomes a little game. They tease each other lightly—soft touches and flirtatious banter—seeing

who can act the least bothered for stream. They're both losing, and yet, neither of them can find it in themselves to mind.

- - -

Of course, nothing is ever that simple.

They're just saying goodbye to chat, having fallen off the Nether Fortress and into the lava below after George left an open-mouthed kiss on Dream's jugular. George is thanking some last-minute donos—reading off names and skimming through messages—so Dream starts to scroll through his phone.

7:46 P.M.

>sapnap< hey uhh you two might wanna tone it down a bit

8:52 P.M.

jealous? there's plenty of me to go around ;) >dream<

>sapnap< sure thing, hotshot. no but srsly twitter's pissed lol

**oh for fuck's sake >dream<
what did I do this time? >dream<**

>sapnap< well, as far as they know, you're straight.

>sapnap< and george is not.

oh, this bullshit again? >dream<

>sapnap< yeah

>sapnap< it got way worse after my first text. you're completely cancelled rn

when am I fucking not? >dream<

>sapnap< alright, fair, but srsly, I think maybe you should make a statement about it or smth before george ends stream. just so it doesn't have time to fester overnight or whatever.

Dream, for all his mistakes, has always tried his best to listen to his fans. Even when he reacts impulsively, he always comes back eventually to try to learn from his mistakes. While he's always avoided labels, he would be willing to use them—though likely in an uncomfortable, ill-fitting way—if it could bring comfort to concerned LGBTQ+ fans.

He would do it without hesitation, if he were the only one with skin in this game.

But then, he looks over at George, smiling at his screen as he thanks a few dozens donations and gifted subs and whoever else and he can't help but think, *Was this what it was like before?*

Dream isn't stupid. He knows that the instant he comes out, he and George will be the subject of more shipping jokes and fanfiction and fanart than ever before and while, selfishly, that thought delights Dream, he isn't sure that George would feel the same. They aren't even formally dating. Dream refuses to subject George to any of this shit until they can have a real conversation about it.

He may love his fans like family, but he loves George more.

no <3 >dream<

I don't owe them anything. not a label, not an explanation. I've asked them before not to label my sexuality. they should know well enough by now that I'm not straight >dream< if they still choose to assume that I am? well then, that's on them. >dream<

>sapnap< dream, I really don't think that's a good idea

>sapnap< you're being impulsive again

Dream looks over at George, bathed in the obnoxious blue glow of his computer screen as he says his final goodbyes. Ten, maybe fifteen seconds to change his mind, to interject and kill the controversy before it has time to spread. Instead, he reaches for George's right hand. George glares at Dream for interrupting his typing as he tries to host Wilbur, but intertwines their fingers anyway, sprawling his left hand out across the entirety of the keyboard.

actually, sap? for once, I'm not. >dream<

I appreciate the concern, but I stand by this. >dream<

>sapnap< alright, dude. whatever you gotta do, I support you. you know that.

I know. >dream<

ily >dream<

>sapnap< ily2 dumbass

"Say bye, Dream!"

"Bye," he mumbles, distractedly.

now, if you'll excuse me, I was told winners get a prize at the end of the game >dream<

>sapnap< ew

>sapnap< I do NOT need to picture you and *george* getting it on. that's like thinking about my parents

>sapnap< also, didn't you fail miserably?? like, you gay panicked and then burned to death

>sapnap< which, like, mood. but still.

shut up, snapmap >dream<

I'm about to gay panic your dad >dream<

>sapnap< dude, my dad is a 57 year old Catholic from Bumfuck, Texas. that is not the burn you think it is.

fuck u >dream<

>sapnap< whatever. go collect your prize, you freak

"Who is it?" George asks, shutting down the computer.

"Just Snapmap," Dream mumbles, raking his hands through his hair and feeling his eyes flutter shut with exhaustion. Being live in front of so many people really takes a toll on a man. There's something to be said about the vulnerability of being so shielded.

"What did he want?" Dream takes too long to answer, mulling over how exactly to present the

problem. George must take that as a sign that he's overstepped because he rushes to correct himself, "Sorry. I didn't mean to nag."

Dream just smiles and throws his arm around George, holding him tightly. "You aren't nagging, idiot. He was just letting me know about some Twitter drama I'm gonna have to deal with later."

George groans. "Can you go, like, a week without getting cancelled?"

"Apparently not."

"What was it this time?"

Dream intends to tell him. He really does. But not yet. They're both still coming down from their streamer highs, untying their masks. He just wants to be here for a minute, holding his... Someone... while he comes down.

"Nothing that can't wait until the morning," Dream murmurs, dotting a quick kiss on his *Someone's* nose.

George giggles and snuggles closer to Dream, whining at the way the arm of his chair digs into his side. "Couch cuddles and a movie?" he suggests.

"Sure."

They stand and stretch. Dream is about to wander into the living room to find a movie when George catches him by the shirt collar.

"I believe I promised you a prize earlier," he whispers, lips so close to Dream's that he can feel the vibrations of the words.

"I lost."

"You got me through my first real stream in almost a year. I'd call that a win for both of us."

Dream lets himself melt a little bit, pushing further into George's hand and bringing his own up around his waist. "Are you sure, Gogs?"

George says nothing. He just allows himself to fall forward ever so slightly until their lips brush. Dream tugs him in by the waist, slotting their mouths together in a kiss that's somehow chaste and desperate, righteous and depraved all at once. It's brief, only a few seconds, no wandering hands or tongues, but it conveys more want, more desire than any kiss either of them have had before.

When they finally break apart, breathless from the sheer yearning occluding the air between them, Dream, ever the poet, sighs, "*Wow*."

George just giggles, burying his face in the crook of Dream's neck. "*Wow*."

- - -

Half a movie and a lot of kisses later, George turns to Dream. "Hey, you never told me what Twitter's so upset about."

Dream just smiles softly and reassures him, "Nothing to worry your pretty little head about." He leans in for another kiss, unashamed in his greed, but George pushes him gently back.

"Dream—" George quickly cuts himself off, gnawing at his own lip. There's clearly something

weighing heavy on his mind, but he doesn't finish what he started to say, instead dropping his hand and his gaze. It's almost submissive. It makes Dream nauseous.

Sometimes, Dream thinks they've come so far, grown so much, and then the smallest thing sends George spiralling backward.

"Hey," Dream soothes. "Talk to me. What's wrong, Gogs?"

"Nothing."

"George. You promised."

George takes a deep breath, steeling himself to look Dream in the eye, straightening his back so he leans away from him a bit. As much as Dream misses the contact, it's nice to see George not shrinking into himself. "I didn't like it when you tried to kiss me while I was trying to have a conversation with you. It's not that I don't like kissing you—Not at all. I think, in the past hour, that's managed to become my new favourite hobby. But just... Not when I'm trying to talk to you. It's what John used to do whenever I tried to talk to him about his—about the way he treated me. It was his way of shutting me up. And I didn't like how you said what you said either. Like I can't handle things. I can. And I want to. I'm your partner, I'm your equal, and I want to be treated as such. I know you didn't mean it that way, but it still made me uncomfortable." George is heaving a little by the end of his speech, like a physical weight has been lifted from his shoulders. He wears an anxious grimace, but he doesn't apologise or slump into himself. Dream feels a strange sense of pride at the sight.

He takes a minute to process everything George said before responding, wanting to ensure that, if George is willing to be honest with him, he really listens.

"You're right, I didn't mean it that way. But I guess, sometimes, I do worry too much about you and treat you with kid gloves. It's not that I don't think you can handle things; You're the strongest person I know. It's just that you've already been through so much that I couldn't help with, so now, I want to shield you from whatever I can. But you're right, that's not fair. You're my partner and you're my equal. And I need to treat you as such.

"And as for the kissing thing, that was a dick move, even if it weren't for everything that happened. I shouldn't have used it as a way to cut you off. It was impulsive and immature."

"Thank you," George sighs, interlacing his fingers with Dream's. "I'm sorry for dumping all of that onto you and killing the mood. I know it seems small. I'm just high-strung right now. Post-stream emotions run high, you know."

"Hey, you never have to apologise for talking to me about what you're feeling." Dream brings George's hand up to his mouth, placing a chaste kiss to his knuckles. "Even if it seems small. I'd rather we address things while they're still small than let them spiral into bigger things."

George hums, playing absently with Dream's fingers. He doesn't ask again, but Dream knows he wants to.

"Twitter is mad because they think I'm queerbaiting. And it's worse than it was before because now you're actually out and, as far as they know, I'm straight. So, not only am I baiting the audience apparently, but they think I'm baiting you, too."

George bursts out laughing. "What? Dream, we were literally making out five minutes ago. If you're baiting me, you're doing a killer job at it. Like, ten out of ten, truly."

“Shut up, idiot.”

“No, but seriously. Why don’t you just tell them you’re queer? Is it some Southern, internalised homophobia thing?”

“No,” Dream laughs. “No, I got over that a long time ago. Probably around the time I realised I was in love with some stupid British twink.”

“Hey!” George whines, punching Dream playfully in the arm. “So then, what is it?”

Dream shrugs and he’s about to write George off, to say it’s not important. He cuts himself off, trying to remember that, while his intentions may be good, he doesn’t need to protect George from the world. They can handle it together. “I know that if I come out, they’ll start back up with the DNF shit, and it’ll be tenfold what it was before.”

George stiffens ever so slightly. He gets what it’s like to be in the spotlight. He’s one of the only people that really understands Dream’s position. That doesn’t make his voice any more stable when he asks, “And that would be a bad thing?”

Dream furrows his brows, confused smile gracing his face. “For me? Not at all. I’d love for the world to see that I’ve got such a beautiful boy on my arm.” He places a hand on George’s jaw, sliding it up along his jawline until his fingers rake through his hair, nails scratching at his scalp. George leans into the touch, eyes fluttering closed in exhaustion. “I just don’t want to rush you, Gogs. We’re still figuring things out. I’m comfortable with where we are. I know how I feel about you. I don’t need to label us to know that I want to spend the rest of my life with you, however you’ll have me.”

George opens his eyes slowly, gaze trained on Dream’s face. He brings his own hand up to meet Dream’s where it’s tangled in his hair. “Thank you,” he rasps, “for being patient with me.”

“Of course,” Dream whispers, turning his hand to interlace their fingers.

“But what if I said I wanted a label?”

The words don’t quite click in Dream’s brain. “What do you mean?”

“You said you didn’t want to rush me. You didn’t want anyone to pressure us into labelling this, what we have together. But what if I want to label it? What if I’m ready?”

Dream’s breath catches in his throat and the corners of his mouth quirk up against his will. “What are you getting at, angel?”

“Would you like to be my boyfriend, DreamWasTaken?”

A relieved laugh tumbles out of Dream’s mouth and, in his shittiest British accent, “Why yes, GeorgeNotFound, I would be delighted to be your boyfriend.”

“You’re so dumb.”

“You started it.”

“Yeah,” George sighs, smiling fondly. “I guess I did.”

They stay like that a moment before Dream works up the nerve to ask, “Can I kiss you now?”

“You had better,” George teases. “I’ll have you know I am a very difficult man to satisfy.”

Dream hums, already distracted as he starts to lean in. "I'll have to take note of that."

They kiss, perhaps for the dozenth time tonight, and somehow, it's even better than before. Maybe it's just the weight of the word, a warm blanket across their shoulder, melting and molding them together. They said they didn't care about labels and they meant it, but now that they actually have one? It's a happiness they couldn't prior understand.

When they're both out of breath, they just sit there a moment, foreheads pressed together, breathing in the same air, soaking in the same warmth. George is the first to pull away, grabbing his phone off of the coffee table.

"What are you doing?" Dream asks, half-dazed.

"Handling Twitter."

Dream is about to tell him not to worry about it tonight, that they can figure out how to address it in the morning, when he sees George open his camera app. He opens his mouth to ask about it, but George cuts him off. "I'll put a sticker over your face in post."

That only leaves Dream with more questions, but before he can ask any of them, George is holding his phone up with one hand and pulling Dream in by the neck with the other. George kisses him with intent, passionate but calculated. Dream, on the other hand, loses all semblance of rationality the instant he feels his *boyfriend's* lips against his own. He brings one hand to cup his lover's jaw and the other to wrap around his waist, pulling him in closer, obscenely desperate. When George pulls away too quickly, Dream whines against his lips. George only laughs and says, "I was just gonna give you a peck, but you gave them a show, huh, Dreamie?"

Dream blinks himself out of his daze to see George still holding his phone at arm's length, red button illuminated at the bottom of the screen.

George ends the video and Dream immediately asks, "You're not gonna post that, are you?"

"I was planning on it. It would shut people up, for sure. Would that be okay with you?"

Dream thinks it over. The idea of everyone knowing that he's in love with George is perfect. It amplifies the warmth he feels around George by a magnitude ten. But the idea of everyone seeing that video, even with his face blurred out and, by result, most of the action... It just rubs him the wrong way. There are some things that deserve to belong to just them. There are some things the world doesn't deserve to see.

"I'd rather you didn't. I think I'd like to keep that sort of 'show' between you and me."

George smiles fondly, setting his phone down and interlacing their hands together. "Okay. Whatever you want to do, love. It's your coming out. You deserve to have it just the way you want it."

Dream smiles back at him, leaning in to press a chaste kiss to his cheek before looking back down at their hands.

He grabs his own phone off the coffee table and snaps a quick photo of their intertwined hands.

- - -

diana @di4n4dr4ws • 4h

if you're straight, don't fucking act like you're gay + flirt w/ your gay friend. you can't play w/ ppl's emotions just bc you think it's funny. it's common fucking sense @dreamwastaken

|

dream @dreamwastaken • 4m

I'M STRAIGHT???? oh god oh fuck how am I gonna break the news to my boyfriend D:

[IMAGE]

|

George ✓ @GeorgeNotFound • 1m

You're such an idiot. Put your stupid phone down and kiss me already.

|

dream @dreamwastaken • 30s

anything for you, beautiful

Chapter End Notes

Hi there!! I'm finally back to a regular update schedule, so I'll be uploading at least once a week, on Sundays or Mondays.

I don't have much to say today, so here's a shameless plug for my socials. I've been on a major Tumblr kick lately. I always post updates there, as well as teasers for upcoming chapters :))

twitter.com/caseywond3r
caseywond3r.tumblr.com

DMs and asks are always welcome!!

love you guys!! :))

along with our cafés

Chapter Summary

Dream encourages George to try new things. George takes a leap of faith and feels himself falling in the best possible way.

Chapter Notes

tw: references to sexual coercion

cw: sexual tension, referenced sexual content

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A wise man once said, “The way George falls over, it’s like he’s never fallen before.”

And *goddamn*, was he right.

“George,” Dream wheezes hysterically. “That’s, like, the tenth time you’ve fallen! How are you so bad at this?”

George glares up at him from where he’s sprawled out on the ice. “What part of you thought that this was a good idea?”

“Oh, come on. It was supposed to be romantic.”

It *was* supposed to be romantic. Dream’s been thinking about this for months, ever since June dragged him skating with her and he saw this cute high school-age couple holding hands while skating. He can’t pinpoint why, but that image lived in his head for weeks—some degrading draw toward suburban perfection. He decided that he wanted to give it a try with George. And he decided that their five-month anniversary would be the perfect time to do it.

George didn’t care much about celebrating it. After all, five months isn’t much of anything; It’s just an odd number in a base-twelve system. But Dream has never been one to let a milestone pass by. He insisted they do something, and that something ended up being ice skating.

It was only after they began skating that Dream realised his oversight: George is, by far and away, the clumsiest person that Dream has ever met.

“What is it with you and romance?” George groans. “You know what’s romantic? Laying on the couch, watching movies, and ordering take-out. Something that doesn’t give me bruises.”

“Well, that rules out all the fun things.”

George’s glare deepens for a second, but he washes it away with a sickeningly sweet smile. He reaches out for Dream’s hand, which his boyfriend graciously accepts, trying to pull him to his feet. But George makes no move to stand.

Instead, "If you want to have fun..." He yanks and Dream stumbles forward, tripping over his own feet and collapsing beside his boyfriend. "That should leave a bruise."

Another wheeze echoes off the acrylic shields. "You're such an idiot."

"Yeah, and you love me," George taunts. "What does that say about you?"

Dream smiles like he's realising something amazing, and George is just about to ask what's going on, when Dream leans forward and wraps his frozen fingers around the back of George's neck, running his nails through the hairs at the nape of his neck. Eyes close and lips meet, probably much to the disdain of the middle-aged women who brought their kids here to skate in circles for an hour while they check Facebook. Or maybe not. Neither George nor Dream would know who's staring. They're far too wrapped up in each other to care.

Smaller, softer kisses trail up Dream's jawline, leaving him thanking the icy floor beneath him for suppressing any potential... problems. By the time George's lips are poised at his ear, Dream's breathing is out of control.

Against his skin, George whispers, "I want pizza."

Dream bursts out in another wheeze, all impure thoughts drowned out by unadulterated adoration.

He struggles to his feet, reaching his hand down to help George before immediately pulling it back. "If you pull me down again, I'm not buying lunch."

George rolls his eyes, reaching his hand out.

After helping him up, Dream skates to the rink entrance with George stomping clumsily behind him. He falls again. Dream laughs, but helps him up nonetheless.

It's just like it was on that night so many months ago:

Dream and George curled up together on the couch, Dream with his arm wrapped around George's shoulder, George with his head a heavy and comforting weight against Dream's chest, some movie playing in the background that neither of them are present enough to pay attention to, empty pizza box on the coffee table before them.

It's so reminiscent, and yet it's nothing like it at all.

Every few minutes, Dream will turn his head and press a playful kiss to George's hair and George, in return, kisses Dream's clothed shoulder. They seem to do that a lot lately—these chaste, meaningless kisses. They never lead to anything, and neither of them wants them to. It's more like a grounding technique. A collection of nonverbal promises.

You're here. You're safe. I'll never leave you.

I'm here. I'm safe. I'm learning to love you.

Yet, as happy as he is, Dream can't help but think of that night. Before he can think too much about it, he blurts out, "Do you still get nightmares?"

George tenses in his arms. "Uh... Sometimes, yeah. Not too bad anymore."

The way he says it, Dream knows it's a lie.

“You could always sleep with me, ya know.” It takes an embarrassingly long silence for Dream to realise how that sounded. “Oh shit, no, I didn’t—Fuck,” he laughs at himself.

“You’re good,” George huffs, some of the tension draining from his shoulders. *It’s just Dream. Stupid, dorky, awkward Dream. It’s just me and Dream.* “I know what you meant.”

“And?”

His response comes as a, “Maybe,” but it sounds more like it desperately wants to be a *No*.

“Hey, if you’re not comfortable with that, it’s okay. I’m not going to force you. I’m fucking ecstatic that I even get to hold you like this. I won’t push for more.”

“I know,” but it doesn’t sound like he does. George is quiet again, breathing slow and steady against Dream’s chest for a few minutes before he finds the strength to say, “Can I ask you something? I know the answer already, but I need to hear it.”

“Anything.”

“If I sleep with you... Are you going to try to make me *sleep with you*.”

“No.” Dream shakes his head violently, like he’s trying to shake the very thought from his conscious. “That’s not what this is, George, I promise. I just want you to have the option if you don’t want to be alone. But you don’t have to take it and, if you do, I swear on my life that I won’t so much as touch you unless you explicitly ask me to.”

A nod against his chest and a soft kiss to his shoulder let Dream know that that was the right answer.

They finish the movie without further conversation. A kiss goodnight, and they head to their separate rooms.

- - -

The next night, Dream’s bedroom door creaks open in his sleep.

Dream stirs awake at the noise, looking over his shoulder at the eerie dark across the room.

Into the darkness, he calls, “George?”

A figure appears in the doorway, but not a word is spoken until it climbs onto the bed and clambers over Dream’s feet, lying down about a foot away from him. “I’m sorry I woke you.”

Dream just smiles fondly, reaching out to brush his knuckles across his lover’s jawline. “Don’t be.” Anxiety festers behind his boyfriend’s eyes. The suspicion of expectation. “We can put a pillow between us or something if you want.”

George hesitates before placing his own hand tenderly over Dream’s where it rests against his face. He pulls it closer to his lips, placing a chaste kiss on the pad of Dream’s thumb before resting both their hands between their bodies. “Can we just stay like this?”

Dream squeezes his hand and meets the hazy gleam of his eyes. “Always.”

- - -

They didn’t stay like that. Sleep brought them to twist and turn until Dream was lying flat on his

back and George had all the sheets twisted around his legs, but their hands still lay between them, intertwined, arms bent to leave a few inches between them, just enough room for both of them to breathe.

Dream is the first to wake, trying to stretch only to find his hand heavier than usual. He looks to his left and smiles fondly at the angelic boy with his messy halo and drool crusted on his cheek. He squeezes his hand gently, like a reality check. *Is this real? After all of this time, do I finally have him?*

George's eyes flutter open and the corners of his mouth quirk upward. He squeezes Dream's hand back.

"Good morning, Sleeping Beauty."

George groans, pulling his free hand up to wipe the drool from his cheeks. His eyes slip shut again as he releases Dream's hand, instead throwing his arm lazily over his boyfriend's chest. He tries to scoot closer, but the sheets twisted around his calves keep him from moving too far. He whines, digging his face into the pillow.

"Ya know, if I'd known you were a blanket hog, I might not have invited you to sleep here."

George smirks, sitting up to untangle himself. "I can always *not* sleep here, if you'd prefer."

"No, no," Dream rushes, pulling George down to lay against him. "I would not prefer."

George giggles, slinging his arm back across Dream's waist and pressing his face into the soft expanse of muscle.

Dream ruffles his hair and presses a kiss to his scalp. "I love you," he whispers.

George smiles wider against his boyfriend's chest. "I love your omelettes."

A wheeze escapes Dream, almost rocking George off his chest. "I—I can't believe—Heart been broke so many times—"

"Shut up and go make me breakfast."

"This is Pretty Privilege," Dream huffs, pushing George off his chest and rolling out of bed.

"Damn right it is."

Dream turns in the doorway to face George, letting himself get caught up in the divine beauty of the boy draped in cream-coloured sheets. "Hey, uh..."

George looks up at him, running a hand through his hair. "Yeah?"

"Is this going to become a regular thing? You sleeping in here, I mean?"

George blushes, playing with his fingers when he asks, "Do you want it to be?"

"Very much so. But only if you want that, too."

"I do. I do. Just..." George trails off, pulling down the sleeves of his—or, as his boyfriend is just now realising *Dream's*—hoodie and pressing the soft fabric to his cheeks. "I don't think I'm quite ready... you know..."

"Hey," Dream murmurs, crawling back onto the bed and kneeling before his lover. "All I want in this world is to hold your hand and make you omelettes. I don't care if that's all we ever do, as long as we have that."

"Thank you."

Dream takes George's hand gently in his own, poising it at his lips. In his best British accent, he says, "Of course, my dear."

He slides off the bed and back toward the doorway, stopping when George calls out, "Dream."

"Yeah?"

"I don't want that to be all we ever do. I need a little more time. But I don't want that to be all we ever do." George laughs to himself, almost maniacal. "Someday, Dream? I want you to ruin me."

Like a middle school boy, Dream stands in the doorway, jaw slack and mind entirely blank. It takes him a minute to remember he should respond, and so he nods fervently. George just cackles at him.

"Go make me my omelette already."

Dream nods again, eyes still a little glazed over, but mind certainly no longer blank. He leaves the bedroom to go start on their breakfasts. As soon as he's out of sight, George hears a hissed out, *Yes!*, followed by a sound suspiciously similar to a fist hitting the ceiling and a painful groan.

I'm falling in love with an idiot. I wonder what that makes me.

Chapter End Notes

A bunch of people on the last chapter were saying that if that Twitter interaction happened irl, the entire fandom would just have a collective heart attack, and you're all *right*, like I would for sure lose my shit, but I also feel like they pull so much bullshit as it is that we would all be like "DNF IS REAL???? /J I KNOW THEY'RE JUST BEST FRIENDS BUT LIKE AFHDRBCJ" I mean, mans literally said, "I am a little bit in love with my best friend" and we were all like, "BDGHXSJ ?????? IN LIKE A /P WAY RIGHT DREAM???? DREAM?????? WHERE'S THE SLASH JAY??????"

EN EE WAYS, I started working on making this into a real story and holy fuck I forgot how hard writing is. I love it but it's so much more stressful than just writing fanfic. If any of you are ever interested in being sort of a..... I don't know what to call it. Not necessarily a beta but more of just a person for me to bounce ideas off of and read through parts I'm unsure of. So, if any of you are ever interested in that, just message me on Twitter or Tumblr, or let me know in the comments if there's a better place to chat :))

twitter.com/caseywond3r
caseywond3r.tumblr.com

Much love <33

P.S. Sorry for this being kind of a filler chapter. It's set-up for the next chapter which is..... well, >:))

I don't care, I want you here

Chapter Summary

Nothing seems to be going to plan on Dream and George's anniversary, but they make the best of it, all the same.

Chapter Notes

tw: panic attacks, intrusive thoughts, past manipulation, past infantilisation (not as in *agere*, as in implying someone is weak and needs protection), weight issues (no numbers), referenced sexual assault, safewording (idk if that's the right term, more just saying "stop")

cw: use of real names (only Dream's, which I've used a few times before), mild sexual content

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream had learned his lesson after their five-month anniversary. As cute as it was to watch George flop around on the ice, it wasn't exactly comforting or celebratory. So, for their sixth-month, they'd decided to play it cool and just go out for dinner.

It was supposed to be simple. It was supposed to be easy. It was supposed to be focused on them, and only them, and it was supposed to make them feel like they were the only people who mattered.

It was not supposed to start out with George crying in what had quickly become their shared bedroom.

It's stupid, really. It shouldn't be this bad. It shouldn't send him spiralling the way it does. They're just a stupid pair of pants. A stupid pair of pants he hasn't worn since he bought them back in July, when he first moved here. But as he tugs them up his thighs and they get stuck just beneath his hips, he can't help but feel shattered.

Logically, he knows this was what was supposed to happen. He was too thin before—dangerously so—and now he's healthy. He *knows* that. Logically.

Unfortunately, logic isn't as loud as the suspiciously British voice in his head whispering terrible, horrible, beautiful secrets.

"Babe?"

George's head snaps up at the sound and he sees Dream standing in the doorway to the en-suite bathroom, towel wrapped around his waist.

He's perfect. Tall, tanned, and muscular. A dream come true, if you'll excuse the phrasing.

George doesn't deserve him. Not like this anyway.

"I'm sorry," George whispers, choking on another dry sob.

"Hey, hey," Dream coos, rushing over to George where he sits pathetically curled up on the floor, pants bunched around his thighs. "Sorry for what, Gogs? What's wrong?"

Words escape him as he plays with his hands. He feels for the tag hanging off his waistband and mumbles, "We bought everything in the same size when I first moved here. You said I'd grow into it."

"It's too big, Dream."

"That's what she said."

George shoots him a death glare as he tugs his jeans up from where they sit, low on his hips. "I'm being serious, arsehole. This is the smallest size they have in this store or any of the others we've tried."

"Alright, so we'll buy you a belt."

"I don't want a belt, Dream. I want pants that fit me."

Now, look. Dream is more than happy to order clothes on Amazon if they're going to make George look and feel good. The problem is that the doctor said George is still not a healthy weight and that, if he keeps eating like he should, he'll continue to gain weight until he is healthy. Dream doesn't want these clothes to be a milestone against which George will hold himself; He wants them to be the start of a new life where George will never have to worry about such petulant numbers ever again.

"George, they look good. You look good. Just buy the size you have there and you'll grow into them."

George gives him a look, like he really doesn't like the sound of that. Regardless, he tucks himself back into the dressing room, folding up the clothes he wants and hanging those he doesn't. The jeans make it into the first pile.

"Except the slacks," Dream finishes.

"Except the slacks."

"We went to that fancy store because you wanted one nice suit and it was the only store that carried your size."

"I know. I was there, Dream."

"Gogs, it's okay that they don't—"

"Please," George cuts in. "Please don't. Just let me wallow for a minute."

Dream hesitates. He wants to fix it. He wants to make it better. That's all he ever wants to do. But he can't. If there's anything Dream has learned from these past two years, it's that, if George wants to wallow, Dream just has to let him.

But he doesn't have to let him wallow alone.

Dream sits back against the bed, leaning against George. He figures, to an outsider, they must look pretty funny. George, in tears, with his pants bunch around his thighs, and Dream, trying not to cry for him. He presses a kiss to his shoulder.

Echoing in the smothering silence, “I can fix it.”

In response, lips still pressed to his lover’s shoulder and more gentle than the words should allow, “Don’t you fucking dare.”

“I can. I won’t get as bad as before, I promise. I’ll just eat a little less and lose a little bit and then it’ll all be okay. I’ll be good for you.”

“I said,” Dream growls, turning to kneel before him. “Don’t you dare change a single thing about my beautiful,” a kiss to his cheek, “beautiful,” to his jaw, “boyfriend,” to his lips. “He’s perfect just the way he is and if I found out that he had gone back to his old habits in some sick attempt to please me? I don’t know how I’d live with myself.”

George sits in the echo for a while before smiling shyly and pulling Dream in by the back of his neck. “Thank you.”

They kiss for a moment before breaking apart, Dream smiling against his lips when he says, “Thank *you*.”

George chokes out a laugh, pushing him away. “You’re such an idiot.”

“What do you say we stay in tonight?”

“I thought you made dinner reservations?”

“I did. But you don’t seem much in the mood for going out tonight.”

Truth be told, George wanted nothing less than to be in the public eye. He already felt anxious going out with Dream, so afraid that someone would recognise him and, by extension, Dream. They’d already had discussions with their fans about public privacy and, overall, everyone’s been very respectful. But that didn’t calm the anxiety that came with public outings. All it took was one spiteful or flat-out stupid fan and Dream’s entire brand was destroyed. It was emotionally draining and Dream was right: George does not have the fucking energy for it right now.

“I’d feel bad ruining your plans for the night.”

“It’s just dinner reservations, Gogs. I’d be just as happy watching a movie and ordering take-out. I’d be happy doing anything as long as I’m with you.”

“You’re such a simp,” George huffs, rolling his eyes fondly. He reluctantly slides the offending slack down his thighs, pulling them off around his ankles. Dream fetches a pair of joggers from the dresser. *Their* dresser, in fact.

“I’m just saying that I wish you’d consulted me before buying it.”

“It’s a dresser, Gogs. Not a Ferrari.”

“Okay, first of all, dresser? If you’re trying to convince me to move in with you—”

“You already moved in with me.”

“Move into your room—”

“Pretty much already did that, too. This would just make it official.”

“Would you shut up for literally one second?” George’s tone is snappish but there’s no real fire behind the words. “I know it’s symbolic or whatever, but it’s still a big thing. Moving all of my stuff in here? It’s just a lot, you know? It’s a lot.”

Dream sighs, motioning for George to come to him where he sits on the edge of their bed. When he gets there, Dream pulls him in by his waist, coaxing him with his hands until he’s straddling Dream’s lower thighs. “If you’re not comfortable with this, then that’s okay. We have all the time in the world, Gogs.”

Forehead pressed to Dream’s shoulder, George sighs, breath hot against the fabric. “I’m just nervous,” he confides. “I want to move in here. I really do. I’m just nervous.”

“Because it makes it more real. All of this. You and me.”

George hums his assent, pressing a soft kiss to his boyfriend’s shoulder. It’s not you, love.

In return, lips are buried in his fluffy hair. I know. I understand.

“Dream?”

“Yes, angel?”

“Do you ever think about how royally fucked I’d be if we broke up?”

Dream leans back, cupping George’s face in his hands. “Is that what you’re worried about, Gogs?”

George nods nervously. “I mean, I know I’d be fine on my own—I have plenty of money—but, at the end of the day, that doesn’t change the fact that I am entirely reliant on you. If you kicked me out, I’d have no place to go. I can’t drive, so I’d have to Uber everywhere. I’m doing better with the therapy and stuff, but I still struggle. I’d almost certainly forget to eat if you didn’t remind me, and I’d probably avoid sleeping, too. I wouldn’t even—”

“George. Deep breaths for me.”

“See? This is what I’m talking about! You’re always here and you always fix things and I’m so grateful for that but I don’t even know what I would do without you anymore.”

Dream tilts his lover’s chin up, forcing him to meet his eye when he swears, “And you’ll never have to find out.”

“But—”

“No buts. Even if we broke up—which, by the way, I’ve been in love with you since I was seventeen years old, thank you very much. I’m just about as likely to stop loving you as I am to stop breathing—but even if we did, by some divine disgrace break up, I would never kick you out and I would never leave you. I know you think you rely too much on me, but I rely on you, too. I used to forget to eat, sleep, whatever, because of my ADHD. But having you here... I want so badly to protect you and to make you happy that I’ve started taking better care of myself. I remember to eat because I need to make sure you eat. My sleep schedule isn’t entirely fucked for the first time in, like, a decade because we watch movies and cuddle on the couch every night before we go to sleep and it helps me wind down. I need you just as much as you need me. You’re my best friend, Gogs. I’m never going to just up and leave you. Not in a million fucking years.”

Warmth floats between them in the light of what should be common sense after all these months, but still comes across as a confession. It's a scalding, suffocating sort of humidity.

Finally, George leans in to press a soft, lingering, heatless kiss to Dream's cheek. "I trust you," he promises.

"Good. Because this stupid dresser was kind of expensive."

"I can't believe I'm dating someone who says dresser."

"Yeeshaw, pretty boy."

"You're such an idiot," George huffs, leaning in for one last kiss before he stands, brushing himself off awkwardly. "You should get started clearing out your cupboard. Make some use of that stupid dresser."

"Wait, wait, wait," Dream sputters, rising to his feet. "Forget dresser, what the fuck is a cupboard?"

"Oh, I thought you'd be familiar with it. After all, you were in there for, like, twenty-three years."

"Hey!"

The food was perfect. They'd DoorDashed meatball subs from some little deli a few blocks away and, when they'd arrived, they'd been piping hot and slathered in gooey cheese and tangy marinara sauce. The movie was perfect. A cheesy romcom that they both made fun of for being "the epitome of straight culture," but they both secretly enjoyed the simplicity of the romance. They were perfect, too. They were cuddled up under the blankets with George reeled in so close, he was practically sitting on Dream's lap.

By the time the end credits rolled, Dream was almost mournful at the thought of disturbing their domesticity by leaning forward for the remote. Luckily, or something of the like, George had different plans.

He gently gripped Dream's jaw to capture his attention and pulled him down for a kiss. The breath between them got steamier and steamier until they could feel the scalds on their skin in every place they touched. The burn was beautiful. They needed more.

George climbed onto Dream's lap, thighs bracketing his on either side, arms bracketing his head as he leans forward to rest his elbows on the back of the couch. Gently, as though afraid to startle his lover, Dream brings his hands up and wraps them loosely around George's waist, pulling him in ever so slightly.

Contentedness, almost unbearably immense, spreads across Dream's body like warm Gulf tides drifting up the coast.

For George, however, the warmth is suffocating, pleading. He needs more. He *wants* more.

Almost without thought, George bounces once on Dream's lap, feeling sparks of pleasure shoot up his spine. He bounces again and, this time, Dream's fingers tighten subtly around George's waist, nails digging shallow crescents into his skin through the fabric of his t-shirt. George's hands tangle in Dream's hair, and they're dancing a dangerous dance, the call and response of desperate touches and breathless moans.

A few moments of ecstasy, before, “George.”

George only hums against his mouth, lips parted and breath heavy.

“We need to stop.”

Lips now trailing down Dream’s jawline—soft, sloppy kisses working their way down toward his neck.

“George. We need to stop now.”

One last bruise sucked into Dream’s pulse point, blood pumping just beneath George’s teeth—intoxicating, powerful. Mournfully, he pulls back, admiring his work, his mark. He brings himself to meet Dream’s desperate gaze, leaning closer until their lips brush, close enough to feel the warm breath fanning across them, but not close enough to taste the heat. “What if I don’t want to stop, Clay?”

”You know, now that you’re my boyfriend—”

“Say that again.”

George rolls his eyes fondly, barely suppressing his fond laughter. “What? Boyfriend?”

“God, that is the sexiest word I’ve ever heard.” Dream leans closer, smirking with the confidence of a man who’s never been told no. “Say it again.”

“You’re such an idiot.”

“But I’m your idiot,” he insists, cupping George’s jaw and reeling him in for a kiss that, perhaps, to a different set of people, could be considered desirous. Yet, between them, there was nothing but childlike joy.

“Yes, you are, Clay.”

This, apparently, is what it takes to shock Dream from his haze. He only stares for a moment, completely broken from whatever spell he was in and rushing to acclimate to reality, before just... breaking. He wheezes so hard, he’s practically spasming. His forehead knocks into George’s, eliciting a loud whine and an exasperated, “What?”

“You—Okay, no—That’s not—You can’t—” He descends into another wheezing fit, rendering him speechless once more.

George leans back against the couch, crossing his arms and huffing petulantly. “Glad to hear I’m such a joke to you.” He could almost pass for pissed off if not for the way his lips tug against his frown, desperate to shift into a fond, if annoyed, smile.

“Hey,” Dream whines, stifling the last of his giggles and snuggling up to George’s stiff form, pressing playful kisses to his face. “I’m not laughing at you, idiot.”

George doesn’t move from his position, barely hums his acknowledgement, but his smile is becoming harder and harder to suppress. He only breaks when Dream starts giving him little puppy dog licks in place of the kisses, practically squealing and pushing Dream’s face away from his own.

“What I was going to say before I was so rudely interrupted was that, now that you’re my

boyfriend, I should probably stop calling you by your gamer tag.”

Dream tries to hold back more laughter as he hums, “Mmhm. Yeah, okay.”

“What’s so funny?”

“Nothing. Nothing. I just,” another string of wheezes, “completely fucked myself over.”

George sighs, thinking he might start siding with Tommy on the whole men are stupid thing.

“What’d you do now?”

“No, it’s literally nothing. I’ve just... never really heard you say my name before. I mean, a couple of times as a joke on stream or whatever, but...”

“Oh my god,” George groans. “No. You’re joking! You’re literally gross. You’re literally, actually gross.”

“Hey, no, it was an accident, okay? It’s like, what’s it called?”

“Being a degenerate?”

“Taboo! It feels taboo because you never say it so my brain is just, like, ‘Oh, okay, hello there.’”

“I can’t believe it. I literally can’t believe it. I can’t even call my own boyfriend by his name without him getting all... Icky!”

“No—Okay, no—Shut up. Shut up. It’s not my fault.”

“Callahan coded you to have a name kink?”

“Yes! Yes, that is exactly what happened. In this video, Callahan coded it so that I am horny on main for my best friend who is now my boyfriend—dub for me, fuck yeah—and I want to rail him, respectfully. But not right now. But a little bit right now whenever he calls me Clay.”

“Alright, nope. You’re gross. Go to church or something.” George laughs, shoving at Dream’s chest but collapsing against him nonetheless. “Guess I should stick to Dream for now, then, huh?”

“You can do whatever you want, Gogs. If you’d rather call me Clay, that’s fine. I’ll get used to it. But, if you’d rather save it... Well, let’s just say you’ll have a foolproof way to get what you want, whenever you want it.”

George hums thoughtfully, snuggling up against Dream’s chest. “I’ll have to keep that in mind, Dream.”

“George.” It’s less of a word and more of a sigh, pleading and vulnerable. “Are you sure?”

“As sure as I’ll ever be.”

Dream's hands drift from George's waist down to his ass and down further to his thighs.

"If we're gonna do this, we're gonna do it right."

And with that, Dream scoops him up like some gym rat Prince Charming, and carries him to the bedroom. George feels anxiety rumbling in his stomach, something new bubbling to the surface. This just feels more real all of a sudden. The bedroom... it feels formal in an odd sense. The couch just felt like two stupid, lovesick twenty-somethings messing around. This feels like a ritual—one

in which George is the sacrifice.

There's also something to be said for the strength it took Dream to pick George up. While that same strength is what makes George feel safe and protected at times, right now it's just making him feel small. He holds his breath and counts until they reach the bedroom and he's set gently on the centre of the bed.

A moment to breathe and recollect himself before Dream is climbing on top of him, boxing him in with his firearms, ankles hooked around his own, face too close to see his eyes.

Dream hums and his breath fans across George's whole face and this isn't right this isn't right this isn't "That's better."

And now, Dream's lips are attached to George's neck and his hands are underneath George's shirt skimming up his sides counting ribs and his thoughts go offline completely. There's this horrified feeling, the feeling of an animal caught in a trap wishing he could gnaw its own leg off to escape but unable to reach, and twisting and turning so maybe it looks like the arch of a back instead of the clenching of fists. Maybe. Probably.

It's not that bad, yet. The panic is just buzzing in his fingertips, but it hasn't reached his brain yet. He can still think. He can still talk. He needs to say something and he knows it. But the worst parts about having his brain running strong still are the thoughts that come along with it. Thoughts reminding him, *You started this*.

And he did. Dream asked him to stop, told him he needed to stop, and he refused. He called him by his real name because he wanted the intimacy, the connection... because he wanted Dream to want him so bad that he tore down the paper-thin walls built up between them with his bare hands. He wanted to be touched in every sinful, heartfelt way. And now, he has his wish.

"Can I take this off?" Those few words manage to pull George from the pit he's dug himself into, but they provide no relief. This is Dream. This is *Dream*. He's not going to hurt him. And to tell him that all George has been able to think about with his hands roaming his body was some putrid ex... That would hurt him so badly. He cares so much, cares enough to ask permission before he takes, takes, takes, so the least George can do is give, right?

George nods, and their faces are so close together that their foreheads bump, and they both feel clammy, too hot for the way the AC blasts, and George's fingers fumble with the hem of his own shirt, claiming some last semblance of power to strip himself down, but that's taken away from him by larger, stronger, steadier hands over his pulling the fabric up and over his head. Despite the heat radiating off both of their bodies and the blush creeping up their necks, the air feels all too cold against George's chest. He can't get over the feeling. It's all he can think about—the cold.

A hand slipping downward, a sharp gasp as pressure is applied.

So much time must have passed because Dream wouldn't just jump into this but George can't remember a single moment between his shirt being pulled from his body and Dream's hand against his jeans and he should say something, he should, he should say something, but he started this, right? And nothing bad has happened but Dream's entire body is laid over his and he can't move and his lungs feel tight in his chest like they, too, are being crushed under Dream's weight and he just needs to breathe and think and breathe but he *can't*.

He wonders, absently, in some corner of his mind that still has oxygen, how Dream hasn't noticed that something is wrong and that's when he realises, with abject horror, that he's moaning. It's light and breathy, but it's there. It sounds like pleasure. And that's what it's meant to do.

But there's no pleasure involved and any physical indicator of his enjoyment here is only leftover from moments ago on the couch when everything felt good and safe and now, now, now he's reverted to some fucked up autopilot, the same detached, fucked up place he used to go when John was touching him, touching him like Dream is touching him now, and he would pretend to like it and he's pretending, he's pretending, he knows, but Dream thinks it's real and now he can't say stop because he thinks he's enjoying himself and what a tease what a tease what a tease what a tease

The motion repeats and heavy in his ear lies the whisper, "You like that, baby?"

If the anxiety hadn't graduated into a full-blown panic long ago, it certainly would now. As it is, George hardly registers the words, so caught up in trying not to cry like some poor, overstimulated teenager, but when he does hear them, he's overcome with nausea. He can hear the voice in his head.

It's not your fault you're too fragile for this world. I'll keep you safe from it, baby. I won't let anyone hurt you, won't let anyone else lay a finger on you.

So small and submissive for me. Like I could just snap you in half right over my knee. I could break you, baby.

I didn't mean to hurt you. I only do the things I do because I love you, baby. I do it to help you. You know you need my help.

And somehow, the most painful thing to happen tonight is the one thing George needs to snap himself out of this. Because as much as George wants to please Dream, wants to do anything to make him stay, to make himself worth staying for... He won't do this. He won't go back to being what he used to be. A sad, scared, stupid boy, afraid of the dark and the monsters lurking within it. He won't go back. There's no one to go back to.

With a deep breath and a confidence that's not reflected in the word, George rasps, "Dream."

It's not quite right. It sounds too breathy and desperate and George cringes to hear himself. He needs to say something more, he needs to say something stronger, but every whimper takes the life from his bones and drains him.

"Yeah, baby?"

No one to go back to.

"Dream."

Dream looks up from where he had his face pressed to George's neck, greed morphing into confusion and then to anxiety and pure, unbridled fear. He blinks away the lustful daze and pulls his hand away from George's lap, using it instead to smooth out George's hair, tucking it gently behind his ear. "What's wrong, angel? What happened?"

"Please get off of me." It's soft and frightened, hardly a whisper, but it's firm. Dream rolls off without hesitation, helping George sit up. He gulps down breaths like a man drowned, hand placed over his chest to feel his racing heart. He realises absently that there are tears streaming down his face. He hopes against hope that they weren't there when he first called out, that Dream didn't have to see them right in that moment, but he knows from the way Dream reacted that they probably were.

"God fucking dammit," George huffs, climbing off the bed to pace the room. "God fucking dammit!"

Dream doesn't say a word—just stares, eyes wide and mouth gaping slightly. To him, this is sudden. But for George, this has been building for months.

"I'm supposed to be better! It's been over a fucking year! I did the therapy and the talking and the breathing and whatever the fuck else I was supposed to do! I should be fucking better by now!"

Dream hops off the bed, rushing over to George where he's pacing and tries to reach out for him, but George just turns away, dragging his hands over his face and tugging at his hair. "You're not making any sense, Gogs. What's going on?"

"Nothing!" George shouts, turning to look back at him, tear-stained face contorted in something like disgust, something like failure. "That's the fucking thing! I shouldn't be this upset over absolutely fucking nothing! I'm fucking broken and I'm never going to get better!"

"George, please just try to take some deep breaths. We can handle this. Just talk to me. Tell me what happened and we can fix it, I promise."

A bitter, dismissive laugh tears itself from George's throat, but he falls quickly back into misery. "I had two fucking panic attacks tonight, Dream. And both times, you were the one who paid the price. You booked us this nice little dinner weeks in advance and then, an hour before, you have to cancel because I'm crying on the floor because of some stupid fucking jeans! And then, not even three hours later, I'm crying again because I was being a fucking tease and then I got overwhelmed and now you're all worked up and it's my fault and I can't even help you right now and I know you'll never say it but I know you must hate me for that because you waited six fucking months for this and then I have to go and ruin it! Like I always fucking do!"

George collapses back onto the bed, pulling his knees up into his chest, hyperventilation stealing his ability to so much as stand on his own.

Dream sits down beside him and reaches out to rub his back, a supportive motion, but George just feels overwhelmed right now. He doesn't want to be touched. He doesn't want to talk. He doesn't even want to calm down just yet. He just wants to sit here and be scared for a minute. But he doesn't know how to communicate that while in this state, so he just shrugs a little roughly and Dream gets the hint, pulling his hands into his own lap and staring down at them for a while until George calms down enough to whisper, "I'm here."

"You're here," Dream repeats, nervous smile creeping onto his face.

"I'm safe."

Dream reaches out for George's hand where it's wrapped around his knees. "You're safe."

George lets the words seep into his skin like the heat from Dream's sweaty hand. "I'm sorry," he whispers.

"You have nothing to apologise for."

"I ruined it."

"I don't care."

"Tonight was supposed to be special. Tonight was supposed to be good. I made you wait so long and—and—"

"George." Dream's voice holds no room for the voices in his head to argue. "I don't care. I told

you from the start that none of that shit matters to me. I love you and I just want you to be happy.”

“I lead you on. I got you worked up.”

“You didn’t lead me on. We were doing something together and you started to feel uncomfortable, so we stopped, just like any couple would. These things happen, Gogs. It’s not your fault and I’m not mad. I swear to God, I’m not mad.” He pauses, and George can see the eggshells in his eyes. They haven’t been like this in months—so close together but so far apart all at once. It feels like an insurmountable step backward. Carefully, so damn cautiously, he asks, “Do you want to talk about it tonight or tomorrow?”

And there’s something in the words, the promise of a tomorrow, the insistence that they *will* talk about this, that they *have to* talk about this because that’s what people who love each other do and they love each other, still. The promise that nothing’s changed because of what George can only see as the biggest fuck-up of his life.

A deep breath. A lowering of shields. “I don’t want tonight to end like this. If it ends like this, it’ll just become another terrible memory. I want tonight to be good.”

Dream shifts further onto the bed, cross-legged and facing George, pitifully open as always. His hands sit palm-up on either knee, an open invitation that George summons the strength to accept, slipping his hands over Dream’s without holding. A warm blanket. A wordless promise of *more* and *always*.

“It was a lot of little things.” George pops a marshmallow into his mouth while he talks, trying to retain some lighthearted sentiment. “A bunch of stupid, minuscule triggers that just piled up and overwhelmed me.”

Dream sets two cups of steaming hot cocoa on the kitchen counter, sliding onto the seat beside George as he starts talking, one piled high with half-melted marshmallows and the other watered down significantly. “Your triggers aren’t stupid, Gogs.”

“They were. They were such little things and I don’t know why they affected me like they did.”

“You have PTSD. Things affect you in unexpected ways sometimes. That’s not your fault.”

“I know,” George sighs, wrapping his hands around his mug and taking in the warmth like a hug. “I know.”

Dream reaches out to touch his forearm, smiling nervously when he doesn’t flinch away from the touch. “What went wrong, Gogs?”

George just shakes his head, putting his head in his hands and relishing in the retained warmth. “Can I just start this off by saying that I’m sorry and none of this is your fault—it’s literally just my brain being stupid—and you shouldn’t have to worry about this sort of stuff and I’m really sorry that you do?”

“You can. And in return, I will say that yes, your brain is stupid, but only for thinking that you have to apologise for anything that’s happened tonight and that I would rather be doing literally anything else in the world but taking care of you.”

George doesn’t move his head from where it’s buried in his palms, but Dream can see the edges of a smile creeping onto his face.

With renewed confidence, Dream asks again, “What happened?”

George sighs, finally taking his hands from his face, if only to take a sip of his cocoa. “It started when you picked me up. That wasn’t when the real panic set in, but that’s when I started to feel... not good. It was just a reminder that you’re so much bigger and stronger than me. That you could hurt me if you wanted to—And I know you would never! I know that, I swear I do. I know that with every fibre of my being because you’ve shown me that it’s true. But my brain still gets nervous sometimes because you *could*, you know? It’s like how women get nervous when they see a guy on the train at night even though, logically, that guy’s probably a pretty chill dude and he just wants to get home and watch some rugby or whatever, but there’s always that chance, slim as it may be, that he’s going to hurt them. Just because he can.”

Dream looks like he might be sick, but he doesn’t say a word. He knows what George means, he knows it isn’t personal. He knows there’s nothing to say, so he just waits for the rest.

“And just going to the bedroom, in general. It just... It felt so formal, you know? It felt like a lot of...”

“Pressure?”

“Pressure. Like, it wasn’t our usual flirty, teasing, messing around type shit anymore. It was so intense and intimate and I just got kind of freaked out but, like I said before, that wasn’t, like, *the* trigger. I just needed a minute to breathe and process and maybe check in with you and get a hug and a kiss and then the other stuff happened and I just... *panicked*.”

“The other stuff... That’s when it got really bad, when I started to space out and feel like I was... like it was before, you know? When you put me down on the bed and you got on top of me... I didn’t even realise that that would be triggering. I mean, I just never really thought about it, I guess, but every time we’ve done anything—made out or whatever—I’ve always been on top.” George doesn’t miss the flash of concern that Dream tries to hide. He huffs a laugh, blushing, “I don’t mean like—I don’t want to *top* you, idiot. I just... I think I need to physically be on top, you know? Like,” George’s voice drops to a whisper as his blush threatens to burn him alive, “riding you or whatever.”

Dream bursts out in a wheeze. “Sorry, sorry, that was just—This is a very serious conversation.” He tries to force himself to sit up and school his expression, but immediately collapses back into laughter choking out, “A very... serious... conversation...”

But George is laughing with him, flushed and glowing with the light of unabashed love. “Shut up, idiot. I *am* being serious.” His face falls slowly as his gaze stills somewhere just over Dream’s shoulder. “But really, I don’t... After this, I really don’t think that I can...”

“Hey,” Dream sobers instantly, reaching out to tilt George’s chin so he has to meet his eye. “Whatever you’re comfortable with. Whether that’s being underneath me or on top of me—I don’t care.” He pulls his hand back to hide his own smile when he mumbles, “Besides, the idea of you riding me...”

George squeals, smacking Dream’s shoulder playfully. They both take sips of their now-cold cocoa, trying to hide their matching blushes.

“There’s one more thing,” George says, setting his cup back down and steeling himself to finish off this god-awful conversation. “I don’t like it when you call me ‘baby.’”

“Oh.” Dream looks a little confused. Not disappointed, just confused. “Um, is ‘babe’ still okay?”

“Yeah, ‘babe’ is still fine. Just not ‘baby.’ It’s... I don’t know, it’s probably stupid but it just... It brings back a lot of bad memories and just makes me feel really stupid and small, you know? It’s what he used to call me whenever he was trying to convince me of something. To remind me that I was too pathetic to make my own decisions and that I should just trust him to know what was best for me. It makes it harder for me to tell you when something’s wrong because I feel like I should just let you do whatever, you know?”

“I get that. I kinda like calling you beautiful better, anyway.” A pause, and in the silence, Dream can’t hold in his apologies any longer. He knows this isn’t his fault, but the man he loves still has bloodshot eyes and he can’t help but stare into them and see his own reflection staring back. “I’m really sorry if that added to the whole... thing.”

“It’s alright. You didn’t know.”

Dream hums, tracing patterns on his own knee. They sit in silence for a moment before Dream asks, steady and welcoming, expecting no particular answer, “Do you want to go to bed now?”

George looks up and they hold each other’s gaze for a moment, nervous but *wanting*. “Not really.”

“Yeah,” Dream mumbles, leaning closer. “Me neither.”

Their lips meet again, with just as much passion as they had hours prior, but more confidence now. They’re okay. They know they’re going to be okay.

Kisses trailing down jawlines and fingertips trailing up spines feel different now, the safety of skin pressed against skin, all bathed in obnoxious LED lighting. A symphony of “beautiful” and “babe” and “angel” and “love” and the cacophony of kitchen chairs scraping against the hardwood floor. Call it the *duality of man* if you’d like, or just call it messy. After all, it’s all the same in the end.

Because when tanned, scarred knees fall to the floor and slender hands weave into blonde hair and *pull*, it’s messy. Too much teeth and too little stamina, a hand down Dream’s boxers that clearly isn’t thinking about laundry tomorrow, stifled giggles against each other’s lips, forgotten half-drunk cups of cocoa on the counter that’ll be gross and spoiled in the morning, and when they curl up in bed, George still steals all of the covers.

It’s the most pointless thing you’ve ever loved with all your life.

In the middle of the night, Dream stirs awake from some nightmare he can’t quite remember, feeling anxious and jittery and protective. He rolls onto his side and finds himself in silent awe of the sleeping boy before him, breathing steady, safe, *happy*.

And, like he has so many millions of times before, he pulls his lover into his chest until he can feel his heartbeat against it and he whispers into the nothingness of the night air, “I love you. I hope to God you know that.”

And, like he has so many millions of times before, George pretends the movement didn’t wake him up, afraid to ruin the torturously ethereal moments that can only find their way in the dead of night, but instead wraps his arms lazily around the boy who loves him and lets his lips fall against the curve of his neck. *I know*, they say, wordlessly. *I swear to god, I know*.

Next chapter is pretty much an epilogue, so it should be out within two or three days.

I'm so not ready for this fic to be over. I love interacting with you guys so much and I'm going to miss all of you more than you can even imagine. I'm not going to get mushy yet, I promise, but I just feel so anxious to day say goodbye to all of you guys.

In happier news, I started streaming!! I don't really do much—just hang out and talk to chat, sometimes play guitar or read aloud—but it's really fun and helps me to get some social interaction in without feeling too overwhelmed. Come swing by sometime and say hi!!

twitch.tv/caseywond3r
twitter.com/caseywond3r
caseywond3r.tumblr.com

Much love <33

P.S. Thank you guys so much for 50k hits. I literally happy-cried when I realised. I never thought we would get this far, but here we are :))

as long as you're happy, I don't care

Chapter Summary

The end of a journey. The beginning of a lifetime.

Chapter Notes

A few special thank-you's before we get into the story:

Thank you to all of the readers who've been here since the early chapters and always leave thoughtful and encouraging comments. @ItzDT, @dreamaintfound, @BooksRMyDrugOfChoice, @katlikethesword, @Dragonflywhisperer568, @ant0, @bensoinnit, @racc00n_trash, to name a few. I adore every last one of you and hope that you will stick around and continue filling my comment sections with your immaculate vibes.

A special thank you to Joanie (@sweet_bellyache). You always leave the most supportive comments and give me so much faith in myself. I hope that you'll stay in touch once this fic is over.

And of course, a massive thank you to Skobee, my lovely beta. I would not have been able to finish this fic without you. I was nervous to take on a beta because it felt like so much pressure and room for rejection, but you've been nothing but kind and encouraging so, from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Okay, okay, I'm done being sappy (for now!!). Onto the final chapter:

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When George stirs awake the next morning, it's to one strong arm wrapped around his waist and a warm chest for him to bury his face in. "G'morning," he mumbles, voice raspy with the remnants of a good night's sleep.

Dream looks down with a fond smile, pressing his lips into George's bedhead. "Hey, Sleeping Beauty. Didn't expect to see you up so early." George can almost hear his smirk when he says, "You were pretty tired last night."

George shoves playfully at his chest. "You're such an idiot."

"Yeah, well, I'm your idiot."

"You are," George mumbles, pressing a soft kiss to his shoulder. "Whatcha looking at?"

"Karl and Sap did a podcast last night and now everyone's making memes and stuff about it."

"Yeah? What'd they talk about?"

“I don’t know. Didn’t wanna get up to grab my headphones.” *I wasn’t ready to let go of you*, he doesn’t say. George hears it anyway.

Dream tilts his phone toward George to let him see the meme.

Who Would Win?

> Karl’s Dream Wedding:

- \$4,000 Custom-made white Armani suit with a lace cape
- Fancy French wedding cake with like fifty layers of cream puffs
- Hosted at some beachfront banquet hall on an island just off the coast

> Sarnap hiring Chipotle to cater at a Dave N’ Busters

“I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: How on Earth did *Stinknap* reel in *Karl Jacobs*?”

“Painstakingly slow and with an impressive amount of ‘no homo’s?”

George laughs, sitting up to stretch, but strong arms pull him back. “We have to get up eventually, you know.”

“Soon,” Dream hums, but they both know he’ll never be ready to let go.

They lay together, again, but with some distance between them now, hands intertwined between them, just as they were on that first night.

Echoing in the silence, all too loud and brash as soon as the words leave his mouth, George asks, “Do you think we’ll ever get married?”

Like the 10,000 IQ Genius he is, Dream says, “Uh... I dunno.”

“Not right now, idiot. Just... someday. Do you ever think about it?”

“I mean, yeah. Of course. Can you imagine the viewership? **‘WE GOT MARRIED?!?!?!?! (HE SAID I DO) ***EMOTIONAL***’ ‘DIVORCING MY HUSBAND PRANK *GONE WRONG* *GONE SEXUAL*’**”

“You’re so dumb,” George huffs, trying to sit up again and getting pulled right back down.

“I was just kidding, babe.”

“I know.”

“You’re pouting.”

“Am not.”

Dream peppers George’s face with kisses until he breaks, giggling and rolling away from his attacker. “I was being serious, you know.”

“So was I,” Dream insists, leaning in for a sweeter, slower kiss, whispering against his lips. “I think about marrying you all the time, George. For business purposes, of course.”

George shoves him away playfully, turning onto his stomach and taking Dream’s hand in both of

his own, playing with his fingers to distract from the enormity of this casual conversation, the immensity of such open, hopeful discussion.

“What should we do today?” George straightens out a bit, twirling Dream’s fingers. He has something waiting just beneath his tongue, but Dream can tell he’s struggling to get it out. Dream goes on, “Anything you want.”

A deep breath and, “I want you to teach me how to drive.”

There’s a brief silence before Dream bursts out in laughter. “Gogy in a car—what will he do?”

George’s face lights up. “Is that a yes?”

“Of course. Why wouldn’t it be?”

“Well...” George bites his tongue in hesitance, like he’s afraid to change Dream’s mind. “It would give me some independence. I... I would be able to leave if I wanted to.”

Dream sobers, but he doesn’t look angry, or even sad. He flips onto his side to face his lover, intertwining their fingers tightly together. “George, I want you to look at me and hear me when I say: If you are ever anything less than happy here, I hope you do leave. I love you, Gogs. You’re my entire world. But that’s exactly why I want you to be happy. Even if it’s not with me. All I ever want is for you to be happy.”

George smiles softly, taking in the words, taking in the sincerity in Dream’s gaze as he says them. He pulls himself further up the bed, curling into Dream’s chest. “I’m happy. I’m so goddamn happy, Dream.”

They let the silence stretch on a moment, almost melodic, hands entangled between their sleepy bodies. Even as reality catches up to him, it’s slow, seeping, bringing them back to their bodies. Dream presses a kiss to George’s forehead and whispers, “I’m gonna make us some breakfast. How do crepes sound?”

George giggles, the sound bubbly against Dream’s bare skin. “If you mean pancakes, they sound delicious.”

Dream groans, reluctantly pulling away from George to stand and stretch. “I can’t believe I’m in love with someone who doesn’t know the difference between crepes and pancakes.”

Another laugh, softer, sweeter, somehow, and George burrows back down in the blankets for five more minutes of sleep, but he can’t seem to close his eyes. Something is wrong. Just ever so slightly off. He sits up in bed and calls out, “Dream?”

Muted footsteps pad back toward their room and George stumbles out of bed to meet him at the doorway. On his tiptoes, he presses a soft kiss to his boyfriend’s cheek and whispers,

“I love you, too, Dream.”

Chapter End Notes

Wow. Okay. Anything I say is just going to come off insanely sappy, so I’ll try to keep this short, but I just need to start this off by saying: Thank you. To every single person

who's read this story, to every person who's left kudos, to every person who's left such kind and encouraging comment or reached out to me through DMs. I love and appreciate every single one of you.

I've been writing for as long as I can remember. When I was a kid, I would write nonsensical stories. And when I was a little older, I would write stories to project my own issues and insecurities onto my characters so I could better handle them. I always wanted to become a writer. It was the only thing I wanted for as long as I can remember.

And then, a little over a year ago, I stopped writing. It wasn't so much a decision and more of a conclusion I came to slowly. I decided to study business, to be more practical, that I wasn't good enough to make it anyway so why even bother trying?

I started writing fanfic as a very lighthearted way to deal with my hyperfixations. Losing Face was the first time I actually put effort into a fanfic. It was the first time that people were reading something I had written and poured so much of myself into and they, all of you, had been so kind.

You guys renewed my love for writing. I'm sure that sounds melodramatic, but it's true. And, for that, I can never thank you guys enough. I love each and every single one of you. I hope more than anything that you'll stick around.

On that note:

Those of you on my Tumblr may have seen my promise of a "surprise." Why don't you go ahead and check my profile real quick? I'll wait.

...

...

...

Did you check yet? :))

I know a lot of you were hoping for me to pick Roadtrip back up and I have to be honest, I was hesitant. My writing has improved so much since starting that story that I honestly feel a little weird reading back through it. Regardless, I still love the idea for that story, so I'm returning to it. I won't necessarily be on a schedule for it since I want to devote more time to my non-fanfic writing, but I will definitely be updating it, alongside my Karlnap one-shots.

I've also been a lot more active on Twitch lately. Unfortunately, my last few VODS were lost because I had the wrong settings on my computer, but I've actually figured out how to use OBS, so now I've been streaming Minecraft with my friend, Esta. I'll be streaming tonight 11pm EST, and I'd love to see you guys there. I talk to chat a lot so, if you've commented on this or any of my other fics before, feel free to let me know your AO3 username in chat and I'll probably recognise you. I swear, I actually remember almost every person who comments on my fics because comments always mean so much to me.

Oh, and the last thing: I made a playlist!! It's basically just a collection of songs that remind me of different parts in this story, so feel free to check that out (link below). It's

available on both YouTube and Spotify.

twitch.tv/caseywond3r
caseywond3r.tumblr.com
twitter.com/caseywond3r

[Spotify Playlist](#)
[YouTube Playlist](#)

DMs are always open and comments are always appreciated!! And please, please, please tag me if any of you guys ever feel so inclined as to make fanart for this fic or any of my others!! I would love to see your amazing art!!

Okay, I think that's all. I really don't think I can say goodbye to you guys, so I'm gonna have to be super cheesy and say I'll see you later.

Much love <33

EDIT: 09•29•21

just realised people are still reading this months later and that's so fucking pog??? I love you all????? but anyways, I made a discord so that's a thing you can join if you'd like. we talk about this fic and my others a lot. you'll also get access to works I don't post and early update alerts :))

<https://discord.gg/gw5c5bVSHs>

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!